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The Truth and Consistency of Divine Revelation; with some Remarks on the contrary extremes of Infidelity and Enthusiasm,

IN

EIGHT DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

AT ST. MARY'S,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXI.

AT

THE LECTURE

FOUNDED BY

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

Lectur
181

BY

JOHN BIDLAKE, D. D.

OF CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD.

CHAPLAIN TO THEIR ROYAL HIGHNESSES THE PRINCE OF WALES AND DUKE OF CLARENCE.

OXFORD,

Printed at the University Press, for LONGMAN and Co. Paternoster Row, and J. MURRAY, Fleet Street, London; and REES and CURTIS, Plymouth: and sold by J. PARKER, R. BLISS, and the other Booksellers, in Oxford; and J. DEIGHTON, Cambridge.

1811.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM WYNDHAM,

BARON GRENVILLE,

CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSES

ARE DEDICATED

WITH THE MOST PROFOUND RESPECT

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S

OBLIGED AND VERY OBEDIENT

HUMBLE SERVANT,

JOHN BIDLAKE.

PREFACE.

IN the following Diſcourſes the Author has endeavoured, as in former volumes of Sermons which he has had occaſion to publiſh, to render them as generally uſeful as poſſible. He has not laboured to be abſtruſe, nor does he profeſs to claim the praiſe of originality; being better ſatisfied to produce arguments, however obvious, which may be ſerviceable to the cauſe of true religion.

When we conſider how much has been written by the early apologiſts for Chriſtianity; when we reflect on the numerous controverſies which have called forth the abilities and ſtimulated the exertions of the moſt profound inquirers into ſubjects of divinity; we cannot hope for much novelty at the preſent time. Yet perhaps a few obſervations may be found in this volume, which may place the ſubjects under diſcuſſion in a light ſomewhat different

from that in which they have been generally viewed.

On thoſe particulars which create a difference of opinion among Chriſtians, the Author has endeavoured to expreſs himſelf, ſo as to give as little offence as poſſible. He truſts that his ſentiments are unprejudiced, and wiſhes to reſpect all who may differ from him on conſcientious motives. The cenſures which may be found in theſe Diſcourſes are not deſigned for any particular denomination of Chriſtians; they apply only to the preſumptuous and ſelf-ſufficient, to whatever communion they may belong. While he laments the exiſtence of ſchiſm, he is the friend of univerſal toleration; and while he condemns the arrogance of the illiterate, he cannot but reſpect talents and knowledge, wherever they may be found. But while the Church is aſperſed by illiberality, however painful controverſy may be, its true friends muſt ſtand forward in its defence; and while a ſpirit exiſts which is intolerant and uncharitable, and which would prove ſubverſive of ſound learning and dignified religion, caution cannot be too warmly or too frequently recommended.

For any defects which may appear in the execution of the following work, the Author has to plead, that he has been afflicted with ſevere illneſs; and ſoon after the commencement of theſe Lectures he was incapacitated from the uſe of books, and conſequently from the correction of his own pages; and for the delivery of ſome he was indebted to the kind aſſiſtance of friends.

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SEMINARY

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EXTRACT

FROM

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

—— "I give and bequeath my Lands and "Eſtates to the Chancellor, Maſters, and Scholars "of the Univerſity of Oxford for ever, to have and "to hold all and ſingular the ſaid Lands or Eſtates "upon truſt, and to the intents and purpoſes herein-"after mentioned; that is to ſay, I will and appoint "that the Vice-Chancellor of the Univerſity of Ox-"ford for the time being ſhall take and receive all "the rents, iſſues, and profits thereof, and (after all "taxes, reparations, and neceſſary deductions made) "that he pay all the remainder to the endowment "of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be eſta-"bliſhed for ever in the ſaid Univerſity, and to be "performed in the manner following:

"I direct and appoint, that, upon the firſt Tueſ-"day in Eaſter Term, a Lecturer be yearly choſen

" by the Heads of Colleges only, and by no others
" in the room adjoining to the Printing-Houſe
" between the hours of ten in the morning and
" two in the afternoon, to preach eight Divinity
" Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St
" Mary's in Oxford, between the commencemen
" of the laſt month in Lent Term, and the end o
" the third week in Act Term.

" Alſo I direct and appoint, that the eight Di-
" vinity Lecture Sermons ſhall be preached upon
" either of the following Subjects—to confirm and
" eſtabliſh the Chriſtian Faith, and to confute all
" heretics and ſchiſmatics—upon the divine au-
" thority of the holy Scriptures—upon the autho-
" rity of the writings of the primitive Fathers, as
" to the faith and practice of the primitive Church
" —upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour
" Jeſus Chriſt—upon the Divinity of the Holy
" Ghoſt—upon the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith,
" as comprehended in the Apoſtles' and Nicene
" Creeds.

" Alſo I direct, that thirty copies of the eight
" Divinity Lecture Sermons ſhall be always print-
" ed, within two months after they are preached,
" and one copy ſhall be given to the Chancellor
" of the Univerſity, and one copy to the Head of
" every College, and one copy to the Mayor of the
" city of Oxford, and one copy to be put into the
" Bodleian Library; and the expence of printing
" them ſhall be paid out of the revenue of the
" Land or Eſtates given for eſtabliſhing the Divi-

" nity Lecture Sermons; and the Preacher ſhall
" not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue, be-
" fore they are printed.

" Alſo I direct and appoint, that no perſon ſhall
" be qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Ser-
" mons, unleſs he hath taken the Degree of Maſter
" of Arts at leaſt, in one of the two Univerſities
" of Oxford or Cambridge; and that the ſame per-
" ſon ſhall never preach the Divinity Lecture Ser-
" mons twice."

NAMES OF LECTURERS, &c. [a]

1780. JAMES BANDINEL, D. D. of Jeſus College; Public Orator of the Univerſity. The author firſt eſtabliſhes "the truth and authority of the "Scriptures;—for the authenticity of the hiſ- "tory being acknowledged, and the facts which "are therein recorded being granted, the teſti- "mony of *miracles* and *prophecies*, joined to the "*excellence of the doctrines*, is a clear and com- "plete demonſtration of our Saviour's divine "commiſſion." P. 37.

1781. Timothy Neve, D.D. Chaplain of Merton College. "The great point which the author has prin- "cipally attempted to illuſtrate is, that well "known, but too much neglected truth, that "Jeſus Chriſt is the Saviour of the world, and "the Redeemer of mankind."

1782. Robert Holmes, M. A. Fellow of New College. "On the prophecies and teſtimony of John the "Baptiſt, and the parallel prophecies of Jeſus "Chriſt."

1783. John Cobb, D.D. Fellow of St. John's College. The ſubjects diſcuſſed are; "An inquiry after "happineſs; natural religion; the Goſpel; re- "pentance; faith; profeſſional faith; practical "faith; the Chriſtian's privileges."

[a] This liſt is taken verbatim from Mr. Falconer's Bampton Lectures of laſt year.

1784. Joſeph White, B. D. Fellow of Wadham College; "A compariſon of Mahometiſm and Chriſtia- "nity in their hiſtory, their evidence, and their "effects."

1785. Ralph Churton, M. A. Fellow of Braſe Noſe College; "On the prophecies reſpecting the de- "ſtruction of Jeruſalem."

1786. George Croft, M. A. late Fellow of Univerſity College; "The uſe and abuſe of reaſon; ob- "jections againſt inſpiration conſidered; the au- "thority of the ancient Fathers examined; on "the conduct of the firſt Reformers; the charge "of intolerance in the Church of England re- "futed; objections againſt the Liturgy an- "ſwered; on the evils of ſeparation; conjec- "tural remarks upon prophecies to be fulfilled "hereafter."

1787. William Hawkins, M. A. late Fellow of Pembroke College; "On Scripture Myſteries."

1788. Richard Shepherd, D. D. of Corpus Chriſti College; "The ground and credibility of the Chriſ- "tian Religion."

1789. Edward Tatham, D. D. of Lincoln College; "The "Chart and Scale of Truth."

1790. Henry Kett, M. A. Fellow of Trinity College. "The object" of theſe Lectures is "to rectify "the miſrepreſentations of Mr. Gibbon and "Dr. Prieſtley with reſpect to the hiſtory of the "primitive Church."

1791. Robert Morres, M. A. late Fellow of Braſe Noſe College; On "faith in general; faith in divine "teſtimony no ſubject of queſtion; internal evi- "dence of the Goſpel; effects of faith; reli- "gious eſtabliſhments; hereſies."

1792. John Eveleigh, D. D. Provoſt of Oriel College. "I ſhall endeavour," ſays the learned author, "firſt to ſtate regularly the ſubſtance of our "religion from its earlieſt declarations in the "Scriptures of both the Old and New Teſta- "ment to its complete publication after the re- "ſurrection of Chriſt; ſecondly, to give a ſketch "of the hiſtory of our religion from its com- "plete publication after the reſurrection of "Chriſt to the preſent times, confining however "this ſketch, towards the concluſion, to the "particular hiſtory of our own Church; thirdly, "to ſtate in a ſummary manner the arguments "adducible in proof of the truth of our reli- "gion; and fourthly, to point out the general "ſources of objection againſt it."

1793. James Williamſon, B. D. of Queen's College; "The truth, inſpiration, authority and evidence "of the Scriptures conſidered and defended."

1794. Thomas Wintle, B. D. of Pembroke College; "The expediency, prediction, and accompliſh- "ment of the Chriſtian redemption illuſtrated."

1795. Daniel Veyſie, B. D. Fellow of Oriel College; "The doctrine of Atonement illuſtrated and de- "fended."

1796. Robert Gray, M. A. late of St. Mary Hall; "On "the principles upon which the reformation of "the Church of England was eſtabliſhed."

1797. William Finch, LL. D. late Fellow of St. John's College; "The objections of infidel hiſtorians "and other writers againſt Chriſtianity conſi- "dered."

1798. Charles Henry Hall, B. D. late Student of Chriſt Church. "It is the purpoſe of theſe diſcourſes "to conſider at large what is meant by the "ſcriptural expreſſion, 'fulneſs of time;' or, in "other words, to point out the previous ſteps "by which God Almighty gradually prepared "the way for the introduction and promulga- "tion of the Goſpel." See the Preface.

1799. William Barrow, LL. D. of Queen's College. Theſe Lectures contain "anſwers to ſome po- "pular objections againſt the neceſſity or the "credibility of the Chriſtian revelation."

1800. George Richards, M. A. late Fellow of Oriel College; "The divine origin of prophecy illuſ- "trated and defended."

1801. George Stanley Faber, M. A. Fellow of Lincoln College; "Horæ Moſaicæ; or, a view of the "Moſaical records with reſpect to their coin- "cidence with profane antiquity, their internal "credibility, and their connection with Chriſ- "tianity."

1802. George Frederic Nott, B. D. Fellow of All Souls College; "Religious Enthuſiaſm conſidered."

1803. John Farrer, M. A. of Queen's College; "On the "miſſion and character of Chriſt, and on the "Beatitudes."

1804. Richard Laurence, LL. D. of Univerſity College; "An attempt to illuſtrate thoſe Articles of the "Church of England which the Calviniſts im-"properly conſider as Calviniſtical."

1805. Edward Nares, M. A. late Fellow of Merton College; "A view of the evidences of Chriſ-"tianity at the cloſe of the pretended age of "reaſon."

1806. John Browne, M. A. late Fellow of Corpus Chriſti College. In theſe Lectures the following principle is variouſly applied in the vindication of religion; that "there has been an infancy of "the ſpecies, analogous to that of the indivi-"duals of whom it is compoſed, and that the "infancy of human nature required a different "mode of treatment from that which was ſuit-"able to its advanced ſtate."

1807. Thomas Le Meſurier, M. A. late Fellow of New College; "The nature and guilt of Schiſm con-"ſidered with a particular reference to the prin-"ciples of the Reformation."

1808. John Penroſe, M. A. of Corpus Chriſti College; "An attempt to prove the truth of Chriſtianity "from the wiſdom diſplayed in its original eſta-"bliſhment, and from the hiſtory of falſe and "corrupted ſyſtems of religion."

1809. J. B. S. Carwithen, M. A. of St. Mary Hall; "A "view of the Brahminical religion in its confir-"mation of the truth of the ſacred hiſtory, and "in its influence on the moral character."

1810. Thomas Falconer, M. A. of Corpus Chriſti College; "Certain principles in Evanſon's Diſſo-
" nance of the four generally received Evange-
" liſts, &c. examined."

PRINCETON
THEOLOGICAL
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LECTURE I.

HEBREWS iii. 12.

Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

THIS exhortation of the Apoſtle is founded on an aſſurance that the ſcheme both of the Moſaic and Chriſtian revelation is the work of God. *For every houſe,* ſays he, *is builded by ſome man; but he that built all things is God. And Moſes verily was faithful in all his houſe, as a ſervant, for a teſtimony of thoſe things which were to be ſpoken after; but Chriſt as a Son over his own houſe; whoſe houſe are we, if we hold faſt the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end*[a]. And ſubſequently, in the words of the text, *Take heed, brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

[a] Ver. 4, 5, and 6.

For though the origin of our faith be atteſted by a ſeries of the moſt ſatisfactory proofs, there have been perverſe, diſputatious, and wicked characters in every period, who have denied and contradicted its authority.

But our church has not been eſtabliſhed by the mere preſcriptive ordinances of men ; it has been confirmed by rational inquiry and by ſolid argument : and, having been purified from the corruption of former ages, and triumphed over perſecution, is at length fixed on ſuch a broad and firm baſis, that while it has the fulleſt *confidence and rejoicing of hope* in the divine power that ſupports it, it ſhrinks not from examination, but even challenges fair inveſtigation. Our faith at the ſame time we truſt is ſincere ; but not arrogant. We would recommend to thoſe who are in error or in doubt, who are ſeduced or *hardened through the deceitfulneſs of ſin*, to endeavour to rectify their miſapprehenſions, and to confirm their opinions on the ſame rational principles ; *to prove all things*, and to *hold faſt that which is good*. But while we are thus diſpoſed to promote liberal and honeſt inquiry, we muſt, we ought to diſcourage that preſumptive and unyielding ſpirit which diſdains inſtruction ; a ſpirit, which ever ſince the publication of

Chriſtianity, has been too prevalent. There ſtill exiſt tempers too proud to ſubmit to conviction, and who entertain no deference for the ſentiments of others. When the Saviour of mankind condeſcended to receive and to bleſs the little children which were brought unto him, how inſtructive is his obſervation! *Except*, ſaid he to his diſciples, *except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*[b].

That docile temper, which is neceſſary for the attainment of human wiſdom, can alone qualify us to become wiſe unto ſalvation. From the earlier promulgation of the doctrine of Chriſt to the preſent hour, there have been opponents hoſtile to its ſublime and affectionate ſcheme. Many who have poſſeſſed talents, the undeniable gift of God, in the proud conſciouſneſs of that poſſeſſion have employed them in oppoſition to the giver. They have converted the light, diſpenſed to them by divine grace, into darkneſs. They have dared, according to the alluſion of one of our beſt divines, to lift the arm once withered, but now ſtrengthened, againſt him, who was graciouſly pleaſed to reſtore it[c]. Thus, while

[b] Matth. xviii. 3. [c] Sherlock.

they pretend to boaſt of natural reaſon, they forget how much intellectual light the world has derived from revelation. They judge alone of effects. The waters of Marah have been ſweetened; but the murmuring children of diſobedience are unthankful for the communicated ſweetneſs. From period to period, adverſaries of the truth have advanced in a guilty ſucceſſion, and have tried to build an impious reputation on profaneneſs and rebellion to their God, and their Saviour. Has one been ſubdued? Another, equally proud, in defiance has entered the liſts, aſſumed the armour of the vanquiſhed, or tried a new mode of aſſault. Under the direction however of a divine Providence, and by the aid of reaſon and of human learning, truth has ſtill triumphed; and we confidently truſt it will ſtill remain ſecure, by whatever foes it may be attacked, by whatever ſpecies of warfare it may be aſſailed.

In ſuch a ſtate of the Church, left by the appointment of God, but doubtleſs under the influence of his holy Spirit, to the co-operative powers of man, the neceſſity of ſucceſſive and vigilant defenders muſt be obvious. God having done all for his vineyard, which his infinite wiſdom thinks fit, leaves it to be fenced

and to be cultivated by human means. The utility therefore of inſtitutions ſimilar to this Lecture muſt be apparent; and the pious intention of the Founder will deſerve the applauſe and reverence of poſterity; while the extenſive field allowed for diſcuſſion renders it of more permanent advantage. As new forms of objection are tried, they may meet ready anſwers, and be confuted before their baneful effects be ſpread to any extent. Arguments, which have no novelty in themſelves, may acquire new ſpirit by transfuſion through ſeveral minds; and what one defender may not elucidate, another may render more luminous or more perſpicuous. We have been told on the higheſt authority, that *it needs muſt be that offences will come.* We have been warned againſt perpetual enemies and hereſies. While ſuch exiſt, the friends of the church of Chriſt muſt employ every effort; they muſt be ever watchful; they muſt be always clothed *in the whole armour of God, the breaſt-plate of righteouſneſs, the ſhield of faith, the helmet of ſalvation, the ſword of the Spirit*[d], ready to defend, to combat and to vanquiſh.

But let us not flatter the adverſaries of truth

[d] Epheſ. vi.

with admitting that their opinions are new; for it will be found that they have as little of novelty as of force. In fact, the tenets of modern unbelievers are the mere echoes of objections, long ſince advanced, and long ſince ſilenced. It is remarkable, that the opponents of a divine revelation have never been enabled to offer demonſtration of any facts or arguments which militate againſt it. Their objections are all of a negative character, and ſerve rather to evince their own malice or pertinacity, than to weaken the evidences of religion.

Since then all the objections of infidels are of this negative quality, in the following diſcourſes I propoſe to ſhew; that the evidences of revealed religion are capable of a very high degree of demonſtration; that the ſcheme of divine revelation is grand, comprehenſive, conſiſtent and harmonious in its general deſign; agreeable to the attributes of the Deity, and to the analogies of his œconomy in his natural and moral world. In the courſe of this plan I ſhall take occaſion to anſwer ſome charges of inconſiſtence, which are urged againſt the Clergy, by the two oppoſite characters of unbelievers and fanatics.

It muſt be obvious that ſuch a deſign opens

a very extenſive field of diſcuſſion. But it will be purſued only with a reference to our limits; and although the topics of each diſcourſe will be varied, yet it is to be hoped they will conſiſtently and uniformly tend to the ſame object.

Since every mode of defence has long been ſucceſsfully employed by the able and ingenious, novelty can ſcarcely be expected. To bring ſome arguments into a conſpicuous light, to extract or to concentre, is all which can be hoped; and therefore is all to which any pretenſions can be made.

It ſeems to be permitted by divine Providence, that error ſhould be oppoſed to truth. Perhaps the latter may be elicited and confirmed by the ſame means which are ſucceſsful in human diſcovery. Its luſtre does not indeed burſt on us with irreſiſtible power, but ſheds on us a milder light, better adapted to our capacity, and ſo illuminating objects, that they are at once rendered acceſſible and diſtinct. Lamentable, however, is the reflection, that though the invitations of God and a Redeemer to mankind are altogether engaging and conciliatory; that though they propoſe nothing which can give offence to the rational inquirer; that though they are calculated to

improve the moral ſtate, and, it ſhould ſeem, to win the affections of the world; yet they have ever found bitter and prejudiced enemies; enemies whoſe animoſity ſeems even to be ſharpened by the benign character of the doctrines of Chriſtianity. This animoſity is ſo inflammatory and obſtinate, that no lenient application avails. Charity cannot appeaſe it. Love cannot win it. Mercy is ſullenly rejected becauſe gratuitouſly offered; and there are even men who are willing to periſh without aid, rather than accept the divine arm that is ſtretched out to ſave them. It is impoſſible that Chriſtianity can give offence on any other account than its oppoſition to the ſelfiſh and depraved paſſions of mankind. It cannot therefore be rejected but through ſome infatuation, ſome attachment to error, ſome unconquerable prejudice or inſenſibility.

Let me then be permitted to offer ſome remarks on the ſeveral characters and motives of unbelievers. For if it be well aſcertained that the deſigns and principles of the infidel, however candid in appearance, are really unfair and malignant, their arguments will loſe much of the force with which they are offered, and their influence will be conſiderably diminiſhed. While the unſuſpecting are taught

to believe that infidelity diſplays a ſpirit of liberality and ſentimental freedom, and even of zeal for the good of mankind, they are faſcinated by theſe falſe pretences. But let the maſk be withdrawn; let it be proved, that the wiſdom of man is indeed fooliſhneſs, that the deſign of the infidel is not to lead us to liberty and happineſs, but, on the contrary, that his arguments have a tendency to fill the mind with gloom, diſtruſt, and deſpair; to ruin all preſent comfort, and infallibly lead to temporal as well as eternal miſery; then indeed will the charm of deluſion be diſſolved, and youth and inexperience be preſerved from utter perdition.

There is a ſpirit of preſumption which reſents inſtruction; and the temper of ingratitude is often ſo rancorous, that it derives a malicious ſatisfaction in repaying bounty with injury, and conciliation with inſult. As ſuperſtition is the folly of the groſs and ignorant multitude, ſo infidelity is the crime of the profligate of every deſcription; the refuge, the poor but tranſient conſolation, of debauchery. Thoſe who chooſe to lead a bad life will not be ready to liſten to the perſuaſion or to the dictates of religion. We can therefore eaſily account for the oppoſition of carnal minds. Let it not how-

ever be ſuppoſed that we mean to accuſe all who unhappily adopt ſceptical opinions, of bad morals. We are not ſo uncharitable. We ſincerely grieve that there ſhould ſometimes be found men of exemplary character, who yet are under this melancholy infatuation. But for ſome, who are better informed, we muſt account on very different principles. There is, unhappily, too often a pride in letters. Some, who eſteem themſelves qualified to teach, become uneaſy under preſcription; and wiſh to be the dictators of ſcience. Vanity intrudes into the ſanctity of the ſtudy; is a powerful ſeducer, and often has become the parent of infidelity. Since to tread in the accuſtomed path is to be loſt in a crowd, men hope from every deviation to acquire a degree of pre-eminence, or at leaſt to attract obſervation. He, who inculcates truth already received can alone ſhare diſtinction with the multitude. He, who contends in the ranks may exhibit courage of the higheſt degree, but may fail of diſtinction; but he, who challenges to ſingle combat enſures the notice of every eye. Ambition is ſeldom content to ſhare its honours: it claims perpetual ſuperiority, and is inſatiate of glory. But ſhould the honours of victory not always be attainable by the diſputant, yet even doubt gives an

air of importance, and is a very eaſy mode of acquiring reputation. It is a ſubſtitute for knowledge; ſince to object is eaſier than to defend. Very little talent is requiſite for diſtruſt. Proof and demonſtration demand deep reſearch and conſiderable acquirement.

There is another ſpecies of character, either of natural or acquired apathy, which appears incapable of being affected by any thing great or feeling. This inſenſibility of temper is perhaps the reſult of habitual indolence. That thoſe ſhould be indifferent to the invitations of religion, who are indifferent to all that is intereſting, is what may be expected; but this coldneſs, though it may not amount to abſolute infidelity, though it may not produce active enemies, leſſens the number of our friends. There are many who are ſo careleſs of religion, that they neglect to examine its evidences; and there are others, who, having haſtily adopted the doctrines of infidelity, become too prejudiced againſt revelation to weigh diſpaſſionately the arguments which are brought in its ſupport. Thouſands read the works of unbelievers, who never will conſent to peruſe the admirable and able anſwers which have been written in confutation of them.

It is certain that the temper of the mind

materially affects our religious ſentiments. A cheerful and eaſy temper will incline us to look, not only on all the works of the Almighty with delight, but to love his moral perfections, and to feel an intereſt in all that relates to him. A good mind eaſily amalgamates with religion; but one ſoured by diſcontent, or agitated by turbulent paſſions, will admit nothing exhilarating, and, like deeper colours, will abſorb the rays of light. Such characters acquire a diſtaſte for all that is good or excellent, and delight not in any contemplation, which has a tendency to promote a love and veneration of the divine Being. They look upon all the manifeſtations of his mercy and goodneſs with a ſullen and a ſtupid indifference. In vain the ſun cheriſhes or enlightens: they feel not its warmth, they are not kindled into love or gratitude. They exerciſe reaſon, the beſt gift of Heaven, in ſearching for arguments againſt the power and the providence of God. In his perfections they ſearch only for imaginary error: they diſtruſt divine wiſdom becauſe it is not commenſurate to their finite ſcale of reaſon: indeed they would make human underſtanding the meaſure of infinite wiſdom.

I ſhall not dwell on another cauſe of ob-

jection to the doctrines of our bleſſed Saviour; their perfect purity, and interdiction of all vicious indulgence. To a religion that recommends the ſubjugation of all irregular deſire, that preaches denial, mortification, reſiſtance to temptation, there muſt ever be reluctant hearers. Can the miſer be eaſily perſuaded to diffuſe in bounty what he has accumulated by long and tedious parſimony? the rapacious to reſtitution? the iraſcible to patience? the revengeful to forgiveneſs? or the ſelfiſh to the love of mankind?

Of Atheiſts we need not treat, ſince it may reaſonably be doubted whether ſuch really exiſt; for the impious often confeſs by their fears the weakneſs of their boaſt. Pretenſions to ſuch diſguſting impiety are the effects of mental derangement, and are always accompanied with a total depravity of morals. It is the madneſs of wickedneſs, and the laſt ſtate of corruption. But the manners of the Deiſt are more inſinuating and plauſible, and by ſuch the unſuſpicious are too eaſily deluded. The one immediately alarms a good mind, and he carries in his defiance the ſame external ſigns of ferocity, which characterize animals of prey: the other is at once fair and venomous; mild and ſubtle; gentle and

treacherous: his words are enticing, but infuſe a ſlow and a ſecret poiſon, which ſaps the moral conſtitution, and vitiates the ſoul. Scepticiſm is fond of admiration, and no zealot is more earneſt to make proſelytes than the Deiſt: he muſt be gratified with his circle of hearers and admirers. The Infidel never retires to the deſert for ſilent meditation: he muſt find his converts in ſociety; that ſociety which he diſturbs by a cruel and miſchievous zeal, and whoſe confidence he has ſhaken by deluſive doubts. The preacher of irreligion endeavours to faſcinate by impoſing pretences: he even affects a zeal for the ſervice of mankind, and for the advancement of good morals: he aſſumes the character of virtue: he is clothed in humility: *His words are ſmoother than oil, yet be they very ſwords; the poiſon of aſps is under his lips*[c]: he talks of the beauty of that virtue which he does not practice: he diſguiſes vice under the ſpecious garb of ſome excellence, with a pomp of words his boaſt is of human reaſon and of human ſufficiency, while he is the dupe and the ſlave of his paſſions; and his life, ever at variance with his profeſſions, proves the fallibility of his ſyſtem.

[c] Romans, c. iii. v. 13.

But though the pretences of Deiſts, both ancient and modern, may in ſome reſpects differ, their object is the ſame. They affect the title of philoſophers, while it is their occupation to diſſuade us from wiſdom; not to diſcover truth, but to diſtort it. They have been embodied under various leaders; but the champions are all ſubtle, active, and bold. They perſevere with conſtancy worthy of a better cauſe. They mingle reputation with impiety, and ſyſtematically direct their aim againſt the Rock of Ages. But the ſame ambition, which induces them to reject revelation, inſpires each with the deſire of being the author of a ſyſtem; and, whilſt they are at variance with each other, for their principles are inconſiſtent, they are only agreed in enmity againſt the Goſpel. But, to repeat what has been before obſerved, let not modern unbelievers flatter themſelves with the idea that their ſentiments are novel: all they advance, if it have any variety, is merely a modification of the leading principles of the ſchools of antiquity. Thus the eternity of matter; the fortuitous concurrence of atoms; the irreſiſtible influence of fate; philoſophical neceſſity; objections to a divine Providence from apparent imperfection in his works and moral government; doubts

of a future exiſtence; all theſe various queſtions were agitated by ancient philoſophers. That matter proceeded from the ſubſtance of a ſelf-exiſtent Deity, and that after a period all things would again be abſorbed in him; that he would then exiſt alone; that after another period other beings would be again produced from him, and that theſe ſucceſſive revolutions would be perpetual, was and is ſtill the prevailing doctrine of the Eaſt. The Stoics adopted this opinion as well as the Gnoſtics, who perplexed the firſt preachers of the Goſpel. Ariſtotle, though a naturaliſt, if he did not expreſsly deny the being of God, yet ſuppoſed the univerſe to have exiſted from all eternity, independent of his contrivance or wiſdom. Epicurus, as he made his motive atoms the original cauſe of all created things, conjectured that they would again be reſolved into their firſt principles. His doctrines indeed have been the favourite tenets of the greater part of ſubſequent philoſophers. Whether ſincerely or not, he admitted that there were Gods; and that there is a God modern ſceptics admit. He probably was influenced to this confeſſion by the fear of public cenſure. It is to be ſuppoſed that ſubſequent ſceptics have been under a ſimilar impreſſion; and, to render their

opinions more palatable, grant what they doubt. Yet, while he confeſſed the exiſtence of popular Gods, he denied that they cared for human affairs. And is not this the argument of thoſe who deny a particular Providence? He talked of the beauty of virtue, but removed all the incentives which alone could give it intereſt or vigour. Such too are the opinions of thoſe ſceptical multitudes, who with a perverſe and infatuated ingratitude appear to diſdain the offers of Heaven; who wiſh to owe eternal as well as temporal felicity to any cauſe, rather than to the bounty of their Creator. They will neither be happy in the manner which infinite wiſdom condeſcends to propoſe, nor ſubmit their underſtandings to God himſelf. They attribute excellence to any cauſe rather than to him. They attribute the effect of creative power rather to the efforts of nature, than to the intentions of the Deity. They grant preſcience and contrivance to inactive matter, rather than to the agency of God; and, inſtead of being awakened by the proofs of his wiſdom and goodneſs to ſentiments of love and admiration, they receive all this intimation with coldneſs, if not with abhorrence. Of the origin of evil, the moſt abſurd ideas have been entertained by the Ori-

ental Philoſophers; and yet, however abſurd, they form the grounds of all objections which are ſtill made againſt a particular Providence. Our bleſſed Lord had himſelf to contend with the Sadducees, who, following the doctrines of their founder Sadoc, maintained the ſyſtem of materialiſm, and denied a reſurrection or future ſtate, inferring that there was neither angel or ſpirit. On the whole, we can trace every modern dogma to ſome ancient ſource. How humiliating muſt it then be to the free-thinker, to learn, that he cannot arrogate to himſelf the praiſe of novelty, which is his chief inducement for objecting to revelation; that his favourite poſitions have been anticipated, and are at the ſame time as deſtitute of originality, as they are void of ſolid conviction!

The miracles of our bleſſed Maſter could not be denied by thoſe who ſaw them; but, agreeably to the prejudices of the times, they were aſcribed to the cooperation of evil demons. Impoſture was not imputed to theſe effects of divine power. The proofs were too deciſive and public. Such impiety was reſerved for ſubſequent ages, who could ſuggeſt it with leſs danger of confutation. What then is there of variety, what of conſiſtency, for preſent

Infidels? Like thoſe whom Cicero calls minute philoſophers, their diſpoſition is to diminiſh and to meaſure every thing by a minute ſcale. They look not at the whole ſcheme; they conſider not the agreement of the parts, the unity and combinations by which all becomes great and magnificent. Thus they calculate by an inverſe ratio and by ſubdiviſion, and are incapable of enlarged comprehenſion.

The moſt intereſting ſentiment which the human mind can entertain is that of its connection with the firſt and beſt of Beings. If all Deiſts do not endeavour to annihilate this hope, they decidedly weaken its foundation. They ſubſtitute human inſtead of divine aſſurance; they reduce that to conjecture which ought to be fixed on ſome ſolid baſis. Man may, indeed, by the light of nature, entertain this hope, but confidence can only be acquired from revelation; by the declaration of a Being who is mighty to ſave. This only can be the ratification of promiſe, or the realizing of hope.

Now what is the ſum of all, to which theſe arrogant pretenders would perſuade us, but to ſurrender the complacence of rational conviction for ſcepticiſm and uncertainty? to inter-

rupt the connection that religion offers between the ſoul of man and his Maker? to give up the higheſt authority for viſionary and earthly ſpeculation? Faith in revelation is by ſceptics branded with the name of ſuperſtition. But it may be affirmed, that if ſuperſtition conſiſt in confiding on groundleſs hope, and truſting in falſe pretences, no ſuperſtition can be more groſs than to rely on theſe erroneous and viſionary ſyſtems. But let us not be deceived; let us not forfeit the ſource of true happineſs to gratify the vanity of thoſe, who, though they may be wiſe in their own conceit, bring no aſſurance to the diſpaſſionate mind. Let us not be cheated of our reaſon to ſwell the catalogue of the diſciples of the Infidel, and to exchange the ſoberneſs of truth for the madneſs of impiety. Good men experience a ſoothing power in divine truſt ſufficient to ſoften all the evils and the aſperities of life. It is this happy ſtate of mental tranquillity that infidels and enthuſiaſts equally diſturb: the one robs the ſoul of its beſt ſupport, a confidence in the promiſes of his Saviour; the other would perſuade us, that God is partial and implacable. Thus the mind, agitated and overwhelmed, ſhaken with the tempeſt of doubt, or clouded by the gloom of

deſpair, flies to vice for a refuge, and the ſcene is at laſt too frequently cloſed by horrid ſelf-deſtruction, or by the ſlower ſuicide of intoxication. When we calmly weigh all the arguments of infidelity, they are found *light indeed in the balance.* Wearied with the conjectural perplexities of ſophiſts, and the clamour of diſputants, we ſigh for ſtronger conviction than any which they can afford. Diſguſted with all the pomp and parade of metaphyſical inquiry, and ſhaken from all ſolid ground and hope, we ſhall perhaps be induced at length to envy the humble acquieſcence of the poor woman of Syro-phœnicia, of whom we read in the Goſpel, who intreated to be fed, if it were only *with the crumbs which fell from the Maſter's table*[a]. So vain and inconcluſive are all the arguments of philoſophy! So conſolatory and ſo ſoothing the moſt diſtant expectation of the promiſes of the Goſpel of Chriſt!

I have before obſerved, that a favourite tenet of the Deiſt is the ſufficiency of human reaſon for the conduct of life. No aſſertion can be more falſe. Before reaſon can ſerve for a rule of life, it is neceſſary that men

[a] Matthew xv. 27.

ſhould underſtand and agree on the principles, the limits, and the extent of duty. But all muſt be capable of drawing correct concluſions before they can aſcertain the rule. Of theſe ſome are obvious, but many extremely intricate; and therefore, before we could underſtand our duty, we ought, on their principle, to become adepts in moral ſcience. The impracticability of this is evident; for life would be exhauſted before duty could be underſtood, and knowledge be gained too late for practice. Vicious habits would be formed, and completely eſtabliſhed, before we could correct them. It is further obvious, that a ſanction would ſtill be wanting for the confirmation of every rule. This can only be derived from Heaven. Thus, that children ſhould honour their parents may be deduced from natural religion; but the law of God, which ſays, Honour thy father and thy mother, converts ethical excellence into perfect righteouſneſs, and the ſtill voice which breathes in the language of nature is again loudly proclaimed from Heaven. But it is clear, that the ancient philoſophers were deſirous of forming ſchools from an affectation of ſuperior intellect. They were anxious to gain diſciples to flatter natural vanity, but they cared little for the practical

effect of their inſtructions. Many of them were, beyond contradiction, extremely defective in morals, and for the mass of mankind they had little regard. Now if it could be proved that any nation, or even ſmall ſocieties of antiquity, had ſo far profited by the inſtructions of philoſophy as to have exhibited a living teſtimony of their benefit, and of the efficacy of unaſſiſted reaſon, the aſſertion of the ſceptic would be eſtabliſhed. But as this has never happened; as no nation, no city or ſociety of the world, antecedent to the coming of Chriſt, has given ſuch proof, it is evident that all the precepts and ſchools of philoſophy were extremely ineffectual for this purpoſe.

We have the authority of Cicero to confirm the aſſertion; an authority which cannot be reaſonably queſtioned. It may be urged, that the precepts of our bleſſed Saviour have not completely ameliorated the practice of mankind, ſince much vice is ſtill in exiſtence, and the Chriſtian world ſtill deformed with crimes. At preſent it will be ſufficient to deny this; for we may boldly aſſert, that the doctrines of Chriſt have produced conſiderable effect on ſociety. But admit the contrary, and how would that recommend the light of reaſon,

which has been experimentally defective? But with reſpect to the mode of inſtruction adopted in the Goſpel, there can be no compariſon. The moral doctrines of Chriſt are ſo generalized, that they apply to all deſcriptions and to all capacities of men. Without minute detail, they afford ſuch comprehenſive and applicable rules, that they form a meaſure and a principle of duty for all poſſible occaſions and contingencies. Whereas the ethical ſyſtems of the Gentile world were full of intricacy, and, to be underſtood, required to be deeply ſtudied.

One method of calumniating revelation is to call it the invention of prieſtcraft to eſtabliſh a temporal dominion over the minds of men for the purpoſes of ambition and intereſt. Now though ſuch objects may have been the aim of the ſelfiſh and the artful, yet this, as a general aſſertion, is falſe and unfounded. Will the conduct of more barbarous ages deſtroy the truth of religion? Or can ſuch a charge now be urged with any effect? The Proteſtant faith is founded on rational inquiry, and the renunciation of error. It is an emancipation from the ſlavery of ſuperſtition and bigotry. The evidences of the truth are not confined to the Clergy. Know-

ledge of every kind is now univerſally diffuſed in Proteſtant countries. The eſtabliſhed Church claims no excluſive information; but has opened the Bible for the inſpection of all eyes, and for the examination of all who may ſcrutinize. Free acceſs is given to reſearch. We pretend to no myſteries of evidence. Our arguments are fair, and our diſcuſſion candid and liberal. We wiſh that only to be believed, which may be ſatisfactorily proved. But though leſs coarſe accuſers do not aſperſe us with ſo vulgar a calumny, they inſinuate that we are influenced by a ſelfiſh and a party ſpirit in a common cauſe. Among the defenders of the faith may be reckoned Chriſtians of various denominations, both at home and abroad, who have been equally diligent, and who have been eminently cooperative in confirming its evidences. It will be found too, in the eſtabliſhed Church, that many of its moſt able and active defenders have not been actuated by worldly motives. Of this a Hooker and a Mede are deciſive examples. If a few members of the eſtabliſhment are in poſſeſſion of high emoluments, let not the illiberal propoſe this as an objection to our cauſe. That the Church ſhould be ſupported by ſome temporal advantages is highly proper; and a juſt

and well regulated diſtribution of theſe, to ſtimulate literary exertion and induſtry, is of the greater advantage to ſociety. There are thouſands of our body who ſeek no honour but that of giving glory to God, neither eagerly nor unjuſtifiably graſping at preferment, nor affecting to deſpiſe remuneration, if fairly and honeſtly to be obtained; not repining at the ſucceſs of others, but content "to eat their "bread in peace and privacy[h]," to meditate day and night on the word of God, and to labour without ceaſing *to do the will of their Father which is in heaven.*

To object to a reſpectable proviſion for the Clergy betrays a mean and a levelling ſpirit. There is no poſſibility of regulating the various orders of ſociety by abſtract ideas, and therefore learning and talents are not alone ſufficient to ſupport reſpect. The worldly-minded would not liſten to the doctrines, but rather ſmile at the voluntary poverty of thoſe, who ſhould dedicate their lives ſolely to unprofitable ſtudy. It is a great miſtake to compare the primitive age of the Goſpel with the preſent. Then God was pleaſed to ſupport the Church by ocular demonſtration. The firſt

[h] Hooker.

Chriſtians ſaw and believed ; and yet the doctrines of the Apoſtles were oppoſed and diſputed by the preſumption of their cotemporaries. The proſperity of the church, at preſent, depends on ſecond cauſes, under the ſilent influence of divine grace.

Another reproach of the Infidel is, that a belief in revelation is the conſequence of a blind ſuperſtition. This we deny. To look to futurity, and in diſtreſs to ſupplicate a ſuperior power, is a natural ſentiment. Man does not alone apply to Heaven becauſe he is under the impreſſion of fear, but becauſe he is alſo deſirous of good. The whole of life is a ſtruggle between temporal and eternal intereſts ; and if the former ſometimes prevail, it does not therefore follow that we poſſeſs no conviction of the ſuperior importance of the other. He may ſincerely believe in the truth, who has not grace ſufficient to reſiſt temptation : even all profligate men are not in this ſenſe Infidels. They may always be promiſing themſelves reformation. But here lies the diſtinction : if we conſent to the ſacrifice of principle, or if, having no faith, we profeſs what we do not believe, for intereſted motives only, this is indeed deteſtable hypocriſy. If men make oſtentatious profeſſions of humility, or

of voluntary poverty, to cover the deſigns of artifice, and yet betray an eagerneſs to deceive; or privately enriching themſelves overreach, or take advantage of a neighbour, their religion is indeed vain. Turn over the pages of biographical hiſtory: many will be found, who have arrived at dignity by the fair and direct path of learning and virtue. You may read the annals of many who have reluctantly embraced higher ſtations, and have been induced to ſacrifice, what they have preferred, private tranquillity, becauſe they have been perſuaded that they muſt make the ſacrifice to public utility, and to the ſervice of God. Let us then hear no more of the charge of prieſtcraft. If revelation be true, God will no more ſuffer the ſins of men to extinguiſh its light, than he will ſuffer an eclipſe to produce permanent darkneſs.

To prove our ſincerity in the Chriſtian faith, it is not neceſſary that we ſhould renounce the world; for that would be to forſake our poſts, and to betray the cauſe: but ſincerity rather requires us to ſhew our light unto men, and to *fight the good fight of faith,* [i] *that we may be more than conquerers through him that loved us* [k]. Need we recount the ſufferings of mar-

[i] 1 Tim. vi. 12. [k] Rom. viii. 37.

tyrs? of a Cranmer, a Latimer, or a Ridley? No! But we can appeal to the hiſtory of a Berkely, to prove the diſintereſted conduct of the defenders of religion, and of the paſtors of our Church; and we may add, that the Clergy have ſhewn, and it is humbly preſumed ſtill diſplay, a noble and a generous zeal for the cauſe in which they are engaged.

What muſt be the dying reflections of that man, who has riſked eternal happineſs for the chance of a profligate reputation, or who from deliberate malice has endeavoured to injure the cauſe of religion? Will he not then be reminded by conſcience, that he has contributed to contaminate innocence, to defile virtue, to weaken the bliſsful ſuggeſtions of hope, to add pangs to doubt, to ſharpen the agonies of deſpair and the ſtings of remorſe, to ſhed darkneſs over the dawn of inquiry, to indurate the feelings, to nip the bloſſoms of expectation, and to render the whole of preſent exiſtence wretched and inconſolable? that he has endeavoured to ſhake the baſis of all truth, to injure the beſt intereſts of man, to teach children ingratitude, governors tyranny, and ſubjects rebellion? that he has endeavoured to diſturb ſocial order, and to introduce anarchy and confuſion in its place? How dreadful muſt

his dying reflection be, who has invented a more efficacious and active poiſon, who has given occaſion to all poſterity to bewail the perverſion of his talents, and to lament the hour of his birth; who has contributed to accelerate the corruption of youth, and the ſorrows of grey hairs! Such are the fruits of infidelity! Such are the thorns which muſt render the bed of death more painful! Compare this with the departing hour of his life, who can recollect the utility of his days; who has contrived new modes of reducing the miſeries, or of adding to the comforts of exiſtence; who has enlarged the dominion of goodneſs, and turned many to righteouſneſs.

Finally; from the contraſt, let me be permitted to caution the younger part of my hearers againſt the fallacious and ſeductive perſuaſions of infidelity. Be aſſured, that however the unbeliever may be elated with his own imaginary triumphs, yet happily he cannot ſupport his arguments by proof: he has no demonſtration: he may irritate our feelings, but cannot confound the hope that is in us: if you hear his objection and his aſſurances, you will find, on examination, that the firſt are merely negative, the other groundleſs. The pretender to Atheiſm will tell you that there

is no God, and conſequently no hope or fear from futurity. From him your own obſervation will induce you to turn with diſdain, becauſe every thing within you, and every thing without, confute his aſſertions. Be aſſured, that while he would thus rob you of confidence, he will caſt a diſmal gloom over the whole of your exiſtence, preſent and future; that he will ſteal the light from you, and conſign you to a depth of tenfold darkneſs. The Deiſt chills the ſoul with a frigid apathy. He will tell you that God is good; but has not condeſcended to beſtow his attention on his creatures. Thus he will teach you to hunger for the bread of life, but forbid you to expect to taſte of it. Cruel and melancholy proſpect! more embittered by the aſſurance of the reality of that goodneſs, which you are not to expect to ſhare. If then God regard us not, if he have not been pleaſed to reveal his will to us, if all the expectation on which we have been taught to rely be without foundation, in what are you to truſt? In this child of duſt and aſhes, in this fallible individual, who aſſures us that he has a ſyſtem, which is to ſupport and direct us under every trial; a diſcovery, which has eſcaped all penetration but his own? He recommends to us a diſtruſt of

the wiſdom of an infinite Being, and invites us to confide in the inſect of a day. He takes away the foundation of hope; he leaves us nothing to cheer the ſadneſs, or to ſoothe the pains of exiſtence. We are overwhelmed with misfortune; we are excruciated by pain; we linger under the tortures of diſeaſe; we pine under the languor of ill-health. Where is our conſolation? Only the help of man; of a being who, in ſuch caſes, often cannot relieve us. We find ourſelves ſinking into the grave; that grave which he has made for us a land of doubt and of darkneſs. We are forbid to truſt in the only power which can help. The bitterneſs of death is rendered ſtill more bitter. We are to ſee our deareſt connections and friends dropping around us. Thoſe whom we tenderly love are torn aſunder with the diſtracted fear of eternal ſeparation. Under ſuch circumſtances, we are perſuaded to reject that divine Comforter who offers and can give that peace of mind, *which the world cannot give.* We are to reject the promiſes of revealed religion, which alone afford rational hope and firm conviction. Virtue ſtruggling to improve in the ſchool of affliction is to ſink into forgetfulneſs, and all moral excellence to periſh. Charity and goodneſs, which, if not immortal, muſt be al-

lowed to merit immortality, are to be ſcattered like the fragrance in the air. When we are ſolicited by ſome urgent temptation, we are not to aſk grace or aſſiſtance of God, but to recal to mind the beauty of virtue; as if preſent gratification could be reſiſted by abſtract conceptions. Can this be expected by the ſound philoſopher? Does not this betray an ignorance of human nature? Is not this to forget that men often admire what they cannot love, and that action and ſpeculation are very diſtinct? That this picture is not overcharged, muſt be evident to all who think coolly and impartially. Let us then turn from this dreary proſpect, to the conſolatory invitation of the glorious Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt: *Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our faith without wavering*, and *take heed that none of us entertain an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*

LECTURE II.

ROMANS i. 20.

The invisible things of him from the creation of the world were clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.

THESE words of St. Paul, as well as various other passages of the Scriptures, assert the manifestations of an omniscient and omnipotent Creator in the phenomena of the natural world. The Apostle reprehends the errors of those speculative men, who, in the vanity of their imaginations, had lost sight of the most obvious truth, and had neglected to draw such inference from facts as could scarcely even escape the vulgar; *professing themselves to be wise, they became fools:* for even to the vulgar all created things must appear to have their origin from a supreme Being; because *that which is known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them; because the invisible things of him from the creation of the*

world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead. Before we can entertain any faith in the Chriſtian revelation, it is neceſſary for us to poſſeſs a firm conviction of the doctrine of a particular providence, which conſtitutes the baſis of revelation. It will therefore be requiſite, in the following diſcourſe, to ſhew that the operation of God in the natural world is perpetual and uninterrupted; and we muſt ſo adjuſt the ſtatement of facts, that it may be underſtood how far he employs ſecond cauſes; how ſubſervient, and how extremely limited theſe are; and that they never ought to be miſtaken for their Author, whoſe vigilance is ever actively ſuperintendant; *by whom all things live, and move, and have their being*[a]; *who made the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, with all their hoſts; the earth, and all things that are therein, and who preſerveth them all, and whom all the hoſts of heaven worſhip.*

The grand principle of religion is the being of a God, from which all our obligations and our duties flow. But it is of the higheſt importance, as the ground of the Chriſtian faith, that we ſhould acquire, not only a conviction

[a] Acts xvii. 28.

of the being, but alſo of the particular providence of the Deity. We muſt believe that he is immediately concerned in the works of nature and of grace: for it has been the conſtant aim of Deiſts to leſſen our confidence in the immediate interpoſition of a God; and ſince they have not dared to deny his being, they have laboured to repreſent him as an impaſſive ſpectator of all the affairs of the natural world. Suppoſe the contrary; admit God to be anxious for the happineſs and welfare of man, and all his works of creation; and all the ſyſtems and arguments of the ſceptic loſe their foundation. The doctrines of our bleſſed Lord on this head are ſo expreſs, that we cannot heſitate to place implicit confidence in the ſuperintendence of a particular providence. For, not to inſiſt on all his recommendations of faith and of prayer; his promiſes of grace, of ſpiritual aid, and of a divine Comforter; he tells us, that *the very hairs of our head are all numbered*[b]*; that not a ſparrow falls to the ground without our Father*[c]. And he grounds our truſt in the Goſpel promiſes on this principle. When he informs us, that we ought not to be over ſolicitous about temporal affairs,

[b] Matt. x. 3. [c] Ver. 29.

he remarks, *Behold the fowls of the air, for they ſow not, neither do they reap, neither gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?* In another place, he ſays, *Are not five ſparrows ſold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God. Ye are of more value than many ſparrows*[d]. In theſe inſtances his inference is drawn from this conſideration, that if the meaner parts of the creation be not beneath the immediate and conſtant care of the Creator, we may conclude, that beings who hold a ſuperior rank muſt be proportionably greater objects of heavenly regard.

I ſhall therefore, in the firſt place, endeavour to ſupport the doctrine of a ſuperintending firſt Cauſe, in oppoſition to thoſe opinions which have a tendency to attribute all the order and beauty of the creation to ſecond cauſes.

I ſhall then ſhew, that ſecond cauſes are not independent of the firſt, becauſe they exhibit marks of ſubordination; and that there are relations and analogies throughout nature, which prove that all effects proceed from one and the ſame origin, and contribute to promote one grand and complete deſign.

[d] Luke xii. 6, 7.

Modern ſceptics have attempted to refer the admirable contrivance of the Deity, for the preſervation of all created matter, to voluntary efforts of nature towards perfection, by gradual advance. But who does not perceive, that to attribute productive powers to ſecond cauſes is to render the final cauſe of leſs importance; and if created matter can act by principles that are in themſelves efficient and independent of the great Author of nature, then his care becomes leſs neceſſary, and the doctrine of a particular providence, the firſt and the beſt ground of ſupport under adverſity, is annihilated or weakened. The doctrine before us is a modification of the atomical ſyſtem. It ſuppoſes certain particles of matter to exiſt, endowed with peculiar propenſities, which, however ſhapeleſs at firſt, yet, by continued appetence and action, acquire organization and forms, though by an almoſt imperceptible proceſs. It is admitted, that this change may be the work of indefinite ages, as theſe philoſophers believe the world to be of a much longer date than revelation aſſures us, for they regard the wiſdom which is from above with perfect indifference. They conſider a ſucceſſion of thouſands of ages as favourable to their plan. They adopt the old opinion of the eternity of matter,

and of a circle of revolving years, in which all things fade and revive again and again. Having advanced the exiſtence of prolific fibres, they ſuppoſe them by continual efforts and action to arrive at length to a ſtate of being continually capable of further perfection. But it is abſurd to admit, that matter can become organized by volition. On the contrary, the volition and the power of action would rather naturally ſucceed organization. True philoſophy, with more pretenſions to credit, ſhews us, that all created beings have come from the hands of their Maker exactly provided with ſuch means of increaſe and preſervation as he intended; and though by exerciſe thoſe powers may be developed and expanded, yet that they can no more add of themſelves to their capacities, than the ſea can by its own efforts increaſe the quantity of its fluid; or matter, independent of fixed laws or the will of the Creator, augment its power of attraction. The advocates of this doctrine have confounded a principle of ſelf-preſervation with that of advancement or production. The Almighty, for inſtance, has endowed the whole ſyſtem of nature with ſome faculties of renovation or of reſtitution, within preſcribed limits, but has placed impaſſable boundaries to the perfection

of his admirable works. In a mutable ſtate of things, it is impoſſible but that accident muſt injure the moſt perfect; and to repair theſe probable or poſſible injuries, nature is undeniably poſſeſſed of certain capabilities; but theſe are abſolutely limited. In the animal world we find proviſions for ſupply in caſe of injury or loſs. If in animals a bone be broken, nature is provided with matter to form a callous, which ſerves to reunite and ſtrengthen the injured part. An animal oil is conſtantly ſupplied to lubricate the joints; and to reſtore the perpetual waſte of the ſolids or the fluids there is a conſtant renovating principle. In the vegetable kingdom this principle is variouſly exhibited. Plants have other methods of increaſe beſide that of the ſeed. Some are increaſed by the ſeparation of the root, of the branches, or even buds; which then become new plants, and in this reſemble the inferior tribes of animal life, ſuch as the polypi. Some plants ſend forth ſuckers, by which they become multiplied; ſome increaſe by their very leaves, or what may ſeem to be equivocally leaves or branches; but it is evident that no animal or vegetable genus, ſince it came from the hands of its Maker, has increaſed the number of its parts or faculties. There

can be no truth more clearly eſtabliſhed, than that God has fixed to all nature, as to the waves of the ocean, bounds which they never ſhall paſs. That the works of the creation are governed by laws impreſſed on them by the Almighty, and not by any partial faculties of their own, muſt be apparent from the great frugality, and the whole courſe of nature. Throughout the ſyſtem of created things there evidently appears one regular deſign; and, however the Deity in his infinite wiſdom may be pleaſed to make occaſional deviations, yet theſe are ſtill ſubſervient to a general and uniform ſimplicity.

Were matter capable of ſelf-organization, beſides the deficiencies, which would inevitably be conſiderable, unleſs it were poſſeſſed both of preſcience and ſupreme power, there would be great incongruity and contrariety in the ſeveral parts of the ſame animal or vegetable. Animated forms could not be ſupported, becauſe they would be defective in neceſſary and indiſpenſable organs; the proceſs of vegetation would be interrupted in plants from a ſimilar deficiency. Now, though there is much diverſity in the corporeal ſtructure of animals, and great variety in the forms and habits of vegetables, yet theſe phenomena are all redu-

cible to evident deſign. Animals which creep on the earth are not provided with the means which enable ſome to aſcend into the air, or others to float in the water. Plants again, which inhabit the colder regions, are provided with the means of enduring a tempeſtuous climate; thoſe which are to flouriſh in the parching deſert are ſupplied with peculiar means of imbibing the moiſture of the atmoſphere, and of enduring a long ſtate of aridity. In all creatures, and in all vegetables, there are proviſions peculiar to the habits, the local ſituation, and the purpoſes of each; infinitely indeed diverſified, yet all ſubſervient to one grand and ſimple deſign, which pervades the whole of nature, and beſpeaks the uniform intention of the benevolent and great Creator. All the parts contribute to a beautiful and admirable ſyſtem, proving, beyond all poſſibility of contradiction, the divine wiſdom which animates, which directs, and which has planned the whole. There are the ſame peculiar traces of ſkill, which we diſcover in the artificial works of men of eminent ingenuity. Thus all the works of God tend to harmony and congruity of deſign, in the ſame manner as in the ſyſtems of the heavenly bodies the ſuperior

or ſubordinate operations are governed by one law, and tend to the ſame point of gravity.

But an argument has been drawn from ſpontaneous vitality, or, in other words, the facility by which animals of leſs perfect organization are increaſed, in favour of a ſimilar proceſs of formation of the more perfect. Thus the various ſpecies of polypi, whether larger or microſcopic, may be multiplied, like plants, by cutting or ſelf-dividing. This, however, is only a ſlight deviation of the order of nature; is at the ſame time extremely limited, and ſubject to fixed law. It would be abſurd from hence to conclude, that more perfect animals or plants ever had ſuch an origin; that an oak had been produced from a moſs, or a lion from an inſect.

It has often been urged againſt the doctrine of caſual productions, that when we view any complicated machine, we naturally conclude that it had ſome contriver and maker. It has been further obſerved, that ſhould ſuch a machine by accident be injured or diſordered, and in this ſtate ſhould we again view it and find this diſorder rectified, we ſhould naturally conclude that this was the effect of ſome ſkill ſimilar to that by which it was at firſt formed.

This undoubtedly would be the inference of one who had never before ſeen ſuch an inſtance of human contrivance. To this let it be added, that it is perfectly unnatural to imagine, that even a human artiſt could be indifferent to the effect of any ſpecimen of great ingenuity which was the reſult of his own contrivance. Now it is highly reaſonable to infer, that the Divine Artificer is not regardleſs of his moſt admirable works. A difference does indeed exiſt between the art of man and the wiſdom of God. Human capacity being extremely limited, the works of man are liable to many defects, and require perpetual reparation. The works of God are exquiſitely formed, and we may obſerve in all, that, for the period of duration to which they are deſtined to laſt, there are principles of renovation and repair. This is evident in the human frame, which is ſo conſtituted by nature, that for a limited ſpace of time it is provided with the means of preſervation and renovation. This too is evident in many ſpecies of animals, which, if by accident a limb be loſt, have that loſs ſupplied by the acceſſion of new ones, ſimilar to vegetation: and, laſtly, this is evident in plants, in which there is a regular proviſion for reſtoring parts that are injured or deſtroyed. Here the

philoſopher may aſſert, that God, having afforded ſuch modes of renovation and ſupply, may leave the whole proceſs of nature to go on, on thoſe perpetuating and renovating principles, independent of any particular interpoſition. But it is to be obſerved, that this extraordinary proviſion carries with it all the appearance of actual interpoſition. For it may be aſked, What are theſe principles? Whence is the ſource of that ſupply? If that be not deſtined for perpetuity, yet it intimates a care and regard in the Creator for the work of his hand. Now care implies affection; it is an attribute of Deity; and, in proportion to the excellence of the ſource, it will be more ardent and free from defect. God then cannot but be eſſentially benevolent; and in the proportion of the ſuperiority of his perfections over every thing human, will be his love of his creatures and his creation. The beſt object of human affection too is virtue, the reſult of intellectual perfection, and therefore God cannot but love goodneſs in man, however imperfect in degree it may be. To ſuppoſe the Almighty then not to entertain a peculiar regard for thoſe improvements in the ſoul of man, which have emanated from his own ſuperior excellence, is impoſſible.

Could any thing leſs than divine intellect have adapted a flexible trunk to the elephant, exquiſitely endowed with the ſenſe of feeling; an animal, whoſe neck is ſhort and unbending, and purpoſely ſhort to ſuſtain ſuch a weight of tuſks? Who has endowed the camel with a ſtomach ſufficiently capacious to contain water for a conſiderable length of time, and with feet peculiarly adapted to its habits and utility in traverſing immenſe deſerts? What but wiſe deſign could have given contractile muſcles to enable reptiles to move which are deprived of feet? What but divine power and boundleſs wiſdom could have given a rigid cornea to the eyes of fiſh, capable of reſiſting a fluid denſer than the air? or an hard ſhell to the ſlothful tortoiſe, capable of ſuſtaining the weight of bodies, which, by rapidly moving over them, muſt otherwiſe cruſh them? Why are the viſcera of quadrupeds, which are prone, differently diſpoſed than thoſe of man, who is deſtined for an erect poſture? Why are the lungs of fiſh ſo different from other animals, and ſo exactly ſuited to their element? But it were endleſs to multiply ſuch interrogations. The anſwer to all muſt be evident. It is divine, infallible, unerring wiſdom. It is the power of an intelligent and

Almighty God which alone could produce ſuch provident variety, and adapt it to the ſeveral habits and peculiar circumſtances of his boundleſs creation. There is a diſpoſition in ſome to attribute all the faculties of animals to exerciſe, which has undoubtedly a powerful effect. But unleſs an antecedent proviſion had been made by the deſign of the great Creator, no exertion of the animal could be effective. Aquatic birds would never be able to ſwim if their feet were not originally webbed. It is here to be obſerved, that all inſtances of deviation from the general rule of nature afford us more ſtriking proofs of divine ſkill; nor do they in the leaſt deſtroy the harmony of the works of God, but rather tend to preſerve it; becauſe they evidently prove the complicated, yet uniform intention of the Deity. The concluſion to be drawn from eccentricities is, that while they obviouſly form a part of the general ſyſtem, they are ſo far from affording argument in ſupport of atheiſm, or of non-interference of the Creator, that they directly tend to prove more extraordinary care for the welfare of the creation in general, and of its ſeveral parts.

Another proof of the impoſſibility of accidental arrangement of matter, is the wonderful ſupply for occaſional waſte, and the exact ba-

lance which ſeems to be attained in the works of God. Thus many plants afford nouriſhment to animals, and at the ſame time ſerve for the increaſe and preſervation of the ſpecies. They are conſequently liable to be completely devoured, and but for the provident care of the Deity would be annihilated. This is prevented by their multitudinous production, and by various proviſions for their preſervation and facility of growth. The ſame analogy is obſervable in animals. The more minute theſe are, and for that reaſon very liable to periſh, they are proportionally more numerous. The ſeeds of plants are analogous to the eggs of animals. Whatever in nature is moſt uſeful is moſt abundant. Now many of the minute ſeeds poſſeſs a power of vegetation which is very durable, and which ſeems to be almoſt inextinguiſhable. The eggs of animalculæ are capable of remaining a conſiderable time, without bringing the embryon into life, until they meet with favourable circumſtances. The ſurface of vegetables is covered with the minute and inviſible eggs of microſcopic animals; but as theſe animals are of the aquatic ſpecies, they cannot be hatched without the application of water. As ſoon as they are immerſed in this fluid they become productive.

The harmony which exiſts in all the various works of God is never deranged by the eccentricity of ſubordinate parts. If we look to the celeſtial ſyſtem, does centrifugal force ever induce ſuch exceſs, as to elude the general law by which all matter tends to one centre of gravity? And is there not one general ſubmiſſion of all to the ſimple law of nature, which gives motion and direction to the whole? In the various chemical proceſſes, infinite attractions, combinations, repulſions, and ſolutions, are perpetually in action to produce infinite effects, which are all ſubject to the firſt law. If any appetence of nature could by ſelf-combination or arrangement produce an individual ſpecies, that ſpecies would be at variance with generic laws. It is therefore impoſſible to ſuppoſe this arrangement and ſubordination could ariſe from any other cauſe than one ſuperior Agent; and this Agent can only be an omniſcient and omnipotent God. If it be aſked, whether eternal Preſcience has predeſigned the types and figures of things, and ſo exactly defined their improvements, as to fix their utmoſt boundaries? our reply is, undoubtedly. The doctrine we mean to advance is that there is nothing in nature fortuitous; and that, whatever variations may ariſe, they are all ſubject

to unchangeable laws and reſtrictions. Some inſects are productive of ſeveral generations without the uſual proceſs of renovation; yet theſe ſucceſſions are all limited, and never exceed the preciſe number aſſigned them. Can this be accident?

By attributing to the particles of matter any thing like appetency, if by that term we are to underſtand more than attractive or chemical affinity, we give volition; and as the particles of matter poſſeſs various affinities or attractions, and as ſome are repulſive, or incapable of affinity, ſuch oppoſite volitions would prevent all regular combination, and there would be perpetual conflicts. But if we ſuppoſe them only to act in conformity to the laws of nature, or God, by which we mean the ſame thing, they then act regularly and conſiſtently with the general plan of a ſuperior Agent; of a divine Mind. To ſuppoſe different volitions would be to admit univerſal confuſion. For what contradictions and oppoſite agency would there not be in volition acting without ſubordination? On this head it is neceſſary that we ſhould form diſtinct ideas, that we may not attribute to matter powers which are foreign to its nature; for even if we admit that matter by various combinations may acquire thought,

yet it would be abſurd, and a contradiction, to ſuppoſe thought to be antecedent to ſuch combinations. One of the arguments for the appetential power of nature is that of the increaſe of animal life by ſolitary production. But this only proves that nature has various modes of increaſe; for as this ſucceſſion is extremely limited, it can never be an argument for ſelf-generation, but directly the contrary. It is no more than a mode ſimilar to that by which plants are increaſed by the offset or ſucker. We can readily grant, that particles, infinitely minute, by a concretion of affinities, may form infinite combinations; for this is philoſophically true; and for this we need not the work of ages. The whole ſyſtem of animal life is reproduced by theſe efforts. The time of geſtation in animals, though various, is long in few. Now the particles of the farina of plants are infinitely minute. The ſame is applicable to animal life. But on this myſterious ſubject it is enough to remark, that particles equally minute, by accretion, by accumulation and expanſion, produce a great effect of organization, and this without volition. All is the regular and natural effect of the law of nature, conforming to the model propoſed by the unlimited mind of the Creator; in con-

formity to that, and to his own invariable plan, they can only act. It is not poſſible for the conſtituent particles of organized life to produce other effects than God is pleaſed to decree. The conſtituent principles follow the plan aſſigned them. Thus the conſtituent principles of an animal can never become a plant, nor of a plant an animal; nor can animals have their properties mutable, and from a bird be converted into a fiſh: and the ſame law is undoubtedly univerſal. The volition is in the divine Mind, and nature acts uniformly by that direction, by an imparted energy, under a ſuperintending influence.

Let us now proceed in the next place to ſhew, that ſecond cauſes are not independent of the firſt, becauſe they exhibit marks of ſubordination.

If we turn our eyes to the heavens, we ſee a magnificent apparatus of regular deſign; and, while the ſecondary planets move round their primary, the whole goes on in ſubſervience to the laws of gravity. Nay the very oppoſite principles of centrifugal and centripetal force combine to produce regularity and general effect: and this ſublime concordance is the reſult of great and more minute parts. The ſame regularity is to be obſerved in the whole

of the natural kingdoms, as they are termed, of this our earth. In the ſtructure of animal bodies, in the moral government of the Almighty, and the political government of man, it ſeems to be indiſpenſable to the production of any perfect whole, that there ſhould be a ſubordination and accordance of parts, and in all nature ſubordinate parts act for the benefit of ſuperior. In a plant, the root ſeeks nouriſhment, not for itſelf, but for the tree; the branch ſwells into bulk to ſupport the maſs of leaves, or the weight of its fruit, and all this in exact proportions: the leaf expands and breathes, not for itſelf alone, but to advance the growth of the whole plant. In the moral ſyſtem of the univerſe the ſame beautiful arrangement and harmony exiſts. The paſſions and appetites of the mind, under due regulation, tend to the advancement of the general good. We love not for ourſelves, but for the advantage of others. Virtue cannot be practiſed without conferring a bleſſing on others. Wiſdom cannot be employed without being advantageous to others. Benevolence and charity have expanſive wiſhes, and produce extenſive effects. Again, goodneſs can ſcarcely be a ſolitary bleſſing; and no individual is happy but in communicated happineſs. Even our ir-

regular paſſions are ſo often productive of good to mankind, that, like tempeſts in the atmoſphere, they are, by the wiſe diſpoſition of Providence, often made ſubſervient to general benefit. But as theſe topics are not immediately connected with the ſubject before us, to enlarge on them at preſent would be foreign to the purpoſe of this Lecture. Let it ſuffice to remark, that even here the ſame conſiſtence is apparent, which is ſo eminently conſpicuous in all created things. All ſeems to be the effect of one Intelligence, that has contrived, and governs every part by ſome principle perpetually active, and never forſaking the care or conduct of the whole, or the inferior parts. Now which is more agreeable to reaſon? To ſuppoſe all this to be the reſult of ſubordination; to imagine that the atomical parts ſhould produce all this general and great effect; or that ſome Intelligence governs and directs both the ſuperior and inferior parts to the ſame great and well regulated purpoſe? The anſwer muſt be in favour of a divine Providence. It is contrary to every concluſion of reaſon, to every principle and analogy of the univerſe, that the parts ſhould be greater than the whole, or that the whole ſhould be governed by the individual parts. Gravity is increaſed by accumula-

tion; but the principle of gravity gives action or effect to each of their ſeveral particles: and we might as well ſuppoſe, that the principle of gravity reſulted from combination of leſſer gravities, as that the minute atoms of created matter ſhould govern the whole. Gravity is indeed increaſed by the union of leſſer gravities or particles; but then theſe particles are all influenced by one and the ſame principle. It is the governing principle, which is the primary cauſe, and the parts are only ſubordinate and contributive. Either the parts have intelligence of themſelves, or they are directed and influenced by ſome power, which is the cauſe of principle or action to all; and that they are all governed by a principle, and not by any appetencies or volitions of their own, is ſelf-evident: for it is contrary to all experience and all analogy to conclude, that the inferior parts can direct the greater. General effect is the reſult of inferior ſubordination; the independence of inferior parts would never produce regularity or general effect. He who contrived the great machine, contrived and directed the motion of the inferior wheels: elſe all would be confuſion and imperfection. There is throughout creation but one Intelligence; that Intelligence muſt be ſupreme, and

then it muſt be God. This muſt be the firſt and final cauſe; from this all muſt emanate, and to this all again muſt tend and revert. Whenever we take notice of any thing in nature, we obſerve this ſubordination of parts. If we ſee an animal, we ſee a compound of limbs and organs. If we diſcover ſome diſunited part, we judge that it belongs to an whole; that it is not perfect by itſelf we judge from analogy, and we are never miſtaken. If we ſhould by chance diſcover the limb of an unknown animal, we ſee that it is perfect as a part; but though we cannot immediately apply it to a particular ſpecies, yet perfection is evident in it, and it has the clear mark of ſubordination. Thus while every part in itſelf is perfect, yet that perfection tends to complete a more aggregate perfection.

One general law of animal life is inſtinct; deciſive and inſtantaneous in its operation, and at the ſame time ſo infallible, that were it not limited it would poſſeſs all the indications of primary wiſdom: but this limitation proving that its powers are ſo circumſcribed, proves at the ſame time that it is a ſubordinate agent in nature; that it has no independent influence;

and that it is a ſecond cauſe, under the direction of ſomething ſuperior.

Inſtinct in ſome inſtances ſeems to depend on phyſical principles: thus we find that animals which are deſtined to feed on putrid ſubſtances are provided with the means of ſcenting their prey at a ſurpriſing diſtance. They are accordingly provided with a greater than ordinary proportion of olfactory nerves. The vulture, and other carnivorous creatures, whoſe employment ſeems to be to clear the earth of putridity, by a voracious, and, we might almoſt ſay, depraved gluttony, leſſen the quantity of offenſive corruption, and convert that matter into a vivifying principle, which would elſe ſpread contagion. Is this appetence? No, let us rather admire the wiſdom of the Creator. Animal ſubſtances deprived of life are ſubject to putridity. Putridity is the means of increaſing corruption; and, by rendering the air noxious, produces diſeaſe. But the wiſe Creator has provided creatures, which through the medium of the atmoſphere are enabled to diſcover their deſtined prey, and thus preſerve its ſalubrity. Inſtinct, in other inſtances, ariſes from the ſame exquiſite ſenſibility of the nerves. Some are doubt-

leſs not to be explained on any known principles; but in every inſtance it looks like ſuperior agency. It is decidedly no acquired power of the animal. It is a given quality, becauſe creatures which are poſſeſſed of the largeſt proportion in one reſpect, are remarkable defective in others. Now it muſt be granted, that in ſome degree the powers of animals are the effect of experience; but inſtinct is an inſtantaneous power. Some take time to feed, or to walk, or to fly. Yet others have thoſe faculties immediately on their birth. Theſe are gifts not wholly dependent on experience.

There is one diſtinction between reaſon and inſtinct, that the former never can act but by tuition. Inſtinct, on the contrary, acts immediately, as it were, by an impulſe. Reaſon is even improvable inſtinct. The faculties of animals may, by exerciſe, be enlarged or increaſed; but their inſtincts are immediately and always alike. Reaſon is communicable, but inſtinct is never ſo. Reaſon can impart its powers, inſtinct cannot. Every individual creature of every ſpecies has all its experience to acquire, but all thoſe acquirements ceaſe with the individual. While reaſonable beings profit by antecedent experience, inſtinct does

not. Every generation of animals can effect exactly as much as a preceding one, but no more. The impreſſions of inſtinct are ſtamped at once. Reaſon attains all its improvements by gradual advance. Thus inſtincts, which are the leading principles of animal life, are totally different from improvable powers, and never ripen, as ſome modern philoſophers pretend, by gradual proceſs. It is ſaid, why may not God be the cauſe of cauſes? Undoubtedly he may. But he has been pleaſed to define and limit all the powers he has beſtowed in nature. His creatures are to fulfil his will by no irregular or voluntary efforts. They are the inſtruments of his power. They, like the parts of a machine, are the wheels, or the balance; but are not wheels, or balance, at their own pleaſure. If matter were capable of volition, or proſpective deſign, there would be ſtrange confuſion. In ſome all would be ſight, in ſome all would be ear; they would act for themſelves. The reſult would be, diſcordance. We may ſay, in the words of the Apoſtle, *If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the ſmelling. But now has God ſet the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleaſed him. And if they were all*

one member, where were the body [f]. But in conſidering the variety and the ſubordination of created matter, we may ſay, *there are diverſities of gifts, but the ſame Spirit. And there are differences of adminiſtrations, but the ſame Lord. And there are diverſities of operations, but it is the ſame God which worketh all in all* [g].

There are indeed occaſional variations in nature, which inconteſtibly prove that they are formed by an intelligence not their own. Thus the bones of animals are placed within the integuments of the muſcles, while the one ſerves to give ſtrength, and the other to afford motion, to the limbs, and the whole body. As all ſuch animals are deſtined to move in the light atmoſphere, and to receive nice impreſſions, the fleſh, the organs, and the nerves, are exterior. But in the cruſtaceous tribes the proceſs of nature is in direct oppoſition to this. The ſhell is the bone of the animals, which are deſtined to move in ſhoals, and to be ſhaken in the rocks of the tempeſtuous deep. The muſcles, and the ſofter organs, are incloſed within the leſs fragile ſubſtance, a ſubſtance calculated to reſiſt more powerfully the diſ-

[f] 1 Cor. xii. 17, 18, 19. [g] Ver. 4, 5, 6.

aſters to which the creatures are liable in a life expoſed to continual accident.

It is here apparent, that this variation from the general rule and order of nature muſt ariſe from the contrivance of a divine Intelligence, and that matter, however diſpoſed to motion or arrangement, never could be capable of ſuch foreſight. We find the ſame traces of deſign in the hiſtory of mankind, in all the events occurring, and in all prophecies and diſpenſations which conduced to the great and general plan of the Moſaic and the Goſpel œconomy. An attentive ſurvey of the general and individual hiſtory of mankind will prove, beyond all queſtion, the particular interference of a divine Providence in the affairs of men; but as this life is but a part of exiſtence, we muſt reſt in hope, and truſt that hereafter, in the final conſummation of all events, the great ſcheme will be rendered manifeſt and perfect in all its ſubordinate parts, and in its great deſign.

Let us next, in the third place, conſider the analogies of nature. Of theſe we may take ſuch a brief ſurvey as may enable us to elucidate our poſition; that they proceed from one and the ſame origin, and contribute to promote the ſame grand and uniform deſign.

Though reaſoning by analogy will not in

general ſerve for complete demonſtration, it applies admirably to the preſent argument; for nothing can more decidedly prove that the works of nature have the ſame origin, than the ſimilarity and congruity of principle which is ſo conſtantly apparent throughout the whole.

In the productions of art we apply this argument as a ground of proof. Thus the ſtyle of writing is conſidered a deciſive mark of an author. The ſame criterion is adopted to prove, how far the books of ſacred Scripture are genuine. To purſue the ſame method of analogy, ſuppoſe in a deſert we ſhould diſcover ſome fragments of an ancient edifice; we inſtantly perceive that the broken parts relate to ſome whole. If again, other parts be diſcovered, the congruity and manner of workmanſhip would convince us, that they alſo relate to the ſame ſtructure, and were produced by the ſame artificer; and this argument ſo well applies to the uniform deſign and concordance of parts in the univerſe, that it ſhould alone be ſufficient to produce conviction.

The firſt analogy I ſhall mention, for all the works of nature are full of them, which by their relation ſhew one contriver, is that which exiſts between man and the vegetable world. A plant is formed of organized parts, ſimilar

in many reſpects to the human frame. Plants perſpire and breathe, and even undergo a ſuſpenſion of their powers ſimilar to ſleep. They poſſeſs great and nice ſenſibilities. There is altogether ſuch a reſemblance, that a plant may be ſaid to be an organized being, only without the power of loco-motion.

There is again, in all the proceſs of nature, an almoſt undefinable gradation; for the links are ſo imperceptible, that they are often not to be diſcovered. Thus the higher ſpecies of irrational beings approach the lower of the rational. Animals that move on the ſurface of the earth are connected with thoſe that mount into the air, for we have quadrupeds with wings. Fiſh too are provided with organs ſimilar to theſe, and the amphibious unite the links of water and land animals. Again, the lower order of animated beings ſo melt, as it were, into the vegetable, that they become ſcarcely to be diſtinguiſhed; and, laſtly, vegetable life is connected by ſeveral characters with the animal world. Now the uſe I would make of theſe acknowledged and obvious truths is to prove, that there is a wonderful conſent and gradation and harmony in all the creation, which it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe to have been the effect of accident. On the con-

trary we muſt infer that there is one grand and connected intention in all nature, which eminently diſplays unity of deſign in the Creator. To purſue theſe analogies further, we may remark, that they are ſo adapted to various circumſtances, that it is impoſſible that any concurrence of atoms or particles could produce them. For while ſome are ſubject to infinite varieties, they conduce to one uniform plan.

In the laſt place I obſerve, that the indications of a particular interference of Providence in the works of nature are manifeſt.

It has been demonſtrated by the great philoſopher of this nation, that the perturbing powers, which take place in the ſolar ſyſtem, muſt in proceſs of time deſtroy the planetary motions, unleſs it ſhall pleaſe the firſt Mover of all to interfere and oppoſe this otherwiſe inevitable conſequence. The operation of heat and cold, the continual action of the atmoſphere, the violence of ſtorms, the force that abrades, and the diſſolving powers that ſoften the hardeſt ſubſtances, cannot be reſiſted, even by rocks and mountains. Rivers too continually convey theſe diſſolved or broken particles into the ocean, and thus have a tendency to reduce the whole globe to a level, by filling the cavity of

waters. Theſe are mechanical cauſes perpetually acting. But ſince the mountainous and interior parts of the globe ſtill retain their elevation, it is evident, either that the world is of longer exiſtence than is commonly ſuppoſed, or that ſome particular interpoſition of the Deity has preſerved, and ſtill preſerves its original conſtitution, in oppoſition to theſe potent and mechanical actions.

But it is objected by the Atheiſt, that if all the appearances of nature require a cauſe, the exiſtence even of the Author himſelf requires a cauſe alſo. It is certain that we have no conception of the origin of a firſt cauſe; for our ideas are all limited to time and ſpace; but we have a decided proof that all the phenomena of nature have ſome prior origin. To that we refer. Here our inquiries muſt end. As we are ſatisfied that all things muſt have had a beginning, religion requires no more of us than that we ſhould be content to acquieſce in a cauſe adequate to all effects. It is the pride of philoſophers, in their conjectures, to find a cauſe for every difficulty or phenomenon; and when they have arrived at one, as the Prophet ſays, *they offer incenſe to vanity*, and are ſo elated with imaginary ſucceſs, that they are willing to reſt there. But as every cauſe muſt

have another antecedent, the advantage obtained by reaching one point is but a ſmall advance, even if their diſcoveries be eſtabliſhed by the cleareſt demonſtration. Thus that the deſcent of bodies is the effect of gravity is clearly to be aſcertained. Here the cauſe of effect is diſcovered. But how ſmall is that diſcovery! For when we are aſked, What is the cauſe of gravity? or what is it in itſelf? we are altogether at a loſs for an anſwer; and we find ourſelves ſtill infinitely remote from the knowledge of a firſt cauſe.

Animals are deſtined to prey on each other; the ſtrong on the weak. But there is a wonderful proviſion made by the Creator to preſerve a juſt balance. Did ſuperior ſtrength, or ſuperior cunning, always avail, the weaker kind would be ſoon altogether deſtroyed, and many a genus would be entirely loſt. To counteract this, God has been pleaſed to make a balance of advantages or defects. The ſtronger creatures have their vulnerable parts, and their vulnerable parts are attacked by thoſe who are far inferior in ſtrength; the voracious ſhark, who would make a deſert of the ſea, is attacked and is ſubdued by the ſword-fiſh; ſome creatures eſcape death by their minuteneſs or by flight where their larger enemies

cannot purſue, both by land, and in the water. Many huge animals are the prey of inſects; ſo that, while one is formed for deſtruction, it is vulnerable by inſignificant creatures: and thoſe which from their helpleſs ſtate would eaſily be extirpated, are kept in the catalogue of creation by their wonderful prolific powers. Here are proviſions, proportioned evidently by a juſt balance, not merely applicable to genus or ſpecies, but to the whole creation.

Again, the goodneſs and particular care of Providence is very conſpicuous in the proviſion made for ſeveral important functions of the body, by which their power is increaſed by a twofold proviſion of the moſt uſeful; the eyes for ſight, the ears for hearing, and ſimilar inſtances. Now in the caſe of accidental loſs of the one organ, the other remains as a ſupply for the defect; and in the inſtance of ſight, the remaining perfect organ acquires additional ſtrength. Again, in the total privation of ſight, the faculties of hearing and of touch, and the mental power of memory, are conſiderably increaſed. It is impoſſible, when we remark the ingenuity and the increaſed ſenſibility of the blind, their hearing, the compound nicety of their feeling, which enables them often to live

and to excel in the practice of the arts of muſic and others, not to be ſtruck with the goodneſs of the Almighty in their capacities of improvement and ſubſtitution, by which the miſeries of privation are leſſened, and compenſations are admirably contrived. In ſuch inſtances, the hand, by increaſed ſenſibility, like the antennæ of inſects, performs the office of the ſight, and the memory becomes a ſubſtitute for letters.

There is a moſt remarkable inſtance of the conſtant ſuperintendence of the Deity in the balance which is ever preſerved between the ſexes of animals, but eſpecially of the human race. It has been determined from many accurate regiſters, that the proportion of male and female, born in given periods of years, is nearly the ſame. Here there is a proportion continually obſervable, and never ſo far deviating but that the proportion is the ſame in a given number of years. To account for this on any known principle is impoſſible. It cannot be the reſult of what we call accident. The law is invariable, it is beyond human control. What then can we ſay? Is there a mind ſo loſt even to common ſenſe, as not to be convinced by this unknown but aſtoniſhing influence; this regulation of events, far beyond our limited comprehenſion?

Equally aſtoniſhing is the proportion of things preſerved, not only in the animal, but the vegetable kingdom; indeed, in all the various parts of the creation. Chemical experiments convince us, that perpetual changes are produced in nature by the operation of mutual attraction or affinities, by repulſion or ſolution. Theſe combinations and changes of nature are infinite. But are not theſe ſubject to ſome invincible control? It ſeems as if there were in all bodies certain naturally conſtituent principles, which preſerve them from ſuch mutations as may interfere with the original types.

Laſtly, From all that has been obſerved, it appears that the manifeſtations of the wiſdom, the power, and the over-ruling providence of God, are ſo many, ſo diſtinct, and ſo deciſive, that we may here almoſt be ſaid to poſſeſs ocular demonſtration. Thus *the inviſible things of him from the creation of the world were clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead*; ſo that thoſe who will not be convinced of the ſuperintending providence of God, *are without excuſe.*

LECTURE III.

JOHN i. 17.

For the law was given by Moſes, but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.

BY theſe words it is not meant that the law only came by Moſes, and that grace and truth were not imparted by him; but that they were more clearly revealed through Chriſt. The ceremonial law of Moſes, by the coming of the latter, was abrogated, and the moral law rendered more obligatory; conſequently truth was more fully eſtabliſhed, grace or pardon only ultimately confirmed and ſealed by the atonement through the ſecond covenant; and therefore, though truth and the promiſes of grace were given by Moſes, they were finally confirmed by Chriſt.

In reviewing the Moſaic diſpenſation, we have now to conſider its object and its evidences principally in one light, as it tends

to elucidate the conſiſtency of the great deſign and diſcloſure of the ſcheme of revelation.

The connection which ſubſiſts between the Moſaic and the Chriſtian revelation is intimate and inſeparable. With theſe the prophetic writings, and the hiſtory of the Jews and the Gentiles, form a regular chain of agreement, of which every ſingle link is of great importance; while the ſeparate parts are ſo far connected, that they contribute to complete one grand and comprehenſive ſcheme of providence. We find almighty wiſdom and goodneſs proſpectively employed for the human race, from the inſtant of creation. We obſerve the ſame goodneſs actively and uninterruptedly extend itſelf through all the various changes of human exiſtence, and never terminating, becauſe it promiſes to be ſo employed throughout all eternity.

This harmony and connection between the Old and New Teſtament is evident in every part. There are numerous analogies and relations. The firſt is full of types and repreſentations of the events of the latter. Even thoſe who are not willing to indulge in fancied images, or double interpretations, cannot deny a frequent reſemblance. To mention

only this, that Moſes predicted the intention of God in after-ages to raiſe up a prophet like unto himſelf, would be ſufficient. But the inſtances are very numerous, and the whole law, and indeed all events, were *ſhadows of good things to come.*

The opponents of truth begin with objections to the account of creation. Various theories of the earth have been invented; ſome in ſupport of Scripture, others with a view to confound it; yet it is remarkable, that if thoſe which the pious ingenuity of the friends of religion have hitherto advanced have not been ſo ſatisfactory as might be wiſhed, yet our adverſaries have done nothing which can ſhake its credibility: while, happily, true philoſophy has concurred to confirm, rather than to contradict, the aſſertions of Moſes. The account, for inſtance, which the ſacred hiſtorian gives us, that light was created antecedently to the ſun, has cauſed no little triumph to thoſe who are deſirous of detecting improbability. Was light, ſay they, which emanates from the ſun, created on the firſt day; and was the ſun itſelf, the great ſource of it, created only on the fourth? This implies abſolute contradiction. But if modern conjecture be well founded, and there is every

reaſon to confide in it, the body of the ſun is not the ſeat of light; it is an opake, and, probably, habitable globe; and the light which appears to flow from it proceeds from a ſurrounding atmoſphere: and thus the matter of light might have exiſted before it was called into action. To dwell further on this is needleſs; for perhaps light, like heat, may not be actually reſident in the body of the ſun, but, being in a latent ſtate diſperſed throughout all the ſyſtem, may be ſet in action by ſome principle that emanates from the opake body, and thus rendered perceptible. Scripture is not to be confounded by conjectural philoſophy. Let us then confide in that divine word which, in the ſublime repreſentation of revelation, ſpoke, *Let there be light, and there was light.*

But it may be here remarked, that the grand object of revelation was not to teach mankind philoſophical, but moral truth. That the writings of Moſes were not adapted to the gratification of this ſort of curioſity is indeed evident. His account of the formation of the world is too conciſe and ſummary for ſuch a purpoſe. Their more immediate deſign was of greater importance; to keep alive a true ſenſe of the unity of the ſupreme Being, to preſerve the world from the total darkneſs of

idolatry, and to impreſs men with practical truths, and with moral obligations founded on divine promiſes. The improvements of ſcience contribute to the confirmation of his doctrines, and it is highly probable will continue to elucidate and eſtabliſh them. Where then is inconſiſtence? Aſſuredly not in the Scriptures; but in objectors. They begin with the firſt account which Moſes affords us of the creation, of the fall of man, the origin of evil, and the ſcheme of redemption. Now all profane hiſtory is in its commencement extremely imperfect. Many have pretended to give us a better and more clear ſolution of the origin of things, and the introduction of natural and moral evil into the world. They call on us for implicit belief, while they perſuade us to diſtruſt the ſacred writings. But if they thus demand confidence, we muſt be ſatisfied that they have ſomething better to offer before we can be prevailed on to renounce our own faith. Now it has happened, to the honour and credit of revealed religion, and to the mortification and ſhame of theoretical reaſoners, that no account has yet been given, no ſcheme deviſed, ſo rational as that which the ſacred writings have tranſmitted to us. The aſſertions contained in the Moſaic hiſtory have ſurvived

in credit all theſe evaneſcent ſyſtems; ſome of which have been grounded on the faſhionable principles of the times: but as increaſed knowledge proved the fallacy of preceding concluſions, ſome have inſtantly ſunk into neglect, and others into contempt. Yet the account given us in the ſacred writings on theſe important ſubjects has ſtood the teſt of time and of inquiry, and has remained unſhaken by all the efforts of human oppoſition.

Again, the various phenomena of nature bear teſtimonies to the conſiſtency of the relation of Moſes reſpecting the univerſal deluge, with the truth and probability of circumſtances; ſince there is no part of the globe where evident marks of great convulſions are not to be traced. The ſeveral ſtrata of the earth, diſturbed from their natural poſitions, and not diſpoſed exactly in conformance to their ſpecific gravities, make it evident and undeniable, that great changes muſt have taken place. By ſome, theſe are attributed to the effect of ſubterraneous fire; by others, to water; and yet nothing can be more probable than that both theſe cauſes have contributed. For as many exiſting volcanos, and many now extinct, decidedly prove the ravages of ſubterraneous fire, and as the uncontrollable force of

vapour is now well underſtood, it muſt be clear, that both theſe principles have been employed as the grand agents of convulſion. The Bible tells us, that the *fountains of the great deep* were broken up, and independent of revelation, the univerſality of the deluge is ſelf-apparent, and is further confirmed by the traditions of all nations of the earth, whether barbarous or enlightened.

The account tranſmitted to us of the motives which induced the Almighty to deſtroy the antediluvian world is in itſelf highly probable, and agreeable to experience. When we look on the habits of man we muſt obſerve, that longevity has a tendency to corrupt his principles, and to indurate his feelings. In proportion as ſome vices loſe their ſtimulus by age, others are conſiderably ſtrengthened. Thus avarice, its paraſitical companion, increaſes upon the failing limbs. By length of days the more tender affections loſe their force: and as age was more ſlow in its approach in the antediluvian world, there was a longer ſpace for the reign of turbulent paſſions.

Pride and ambition, it is certain, would be conſiderably more powerful were men conſcious of a longer duration of exiſtence. The probability of death, and the ſenſe of natural

infirmity, ſerve to mortify thoſe intolerable paſſions, and to render them leſs luxuriant; but were they not ſubject to theſe admonitions, they would be ungovernable. Longevity then would naturally ſtrengthen bad habits, and render thoſe more confirmed in wickedneſs, who had long been ſubject to its dominion. But further, there is a diſpoſition in men to grow careleſs of reputation, and bolder in ſin, by continued practice: and for theſe probable cauſes we need not wonder that wickedneſs ſhould have overſpread the earth.

It was ſuppoſed by ancient philoſophers, and the ſame opinion is ſtill maintained by ſome modern, that the world is of much higher antiquity than Moſes aſſerts; that, in fact, matter is eternal; and that both this earth and human events have been ſubject to many and ſucceſſive revolutions; but what demonſtration is there to ſupport thoſe opinions? None. In oppoſition to this, it has been well anſwered, that we have no traces of ſuch preexiſtence; that the uncultivated ſtate of large portions of the globe, and the erratic life of its earlier inhabitants, prove that it has been thinly peopled; that the lateneſs of many diſcoveries, and various other circumſtances, corroborate the account given by Moſes of the

age and hiſtory of mankind. We have no credible record of more than ſix thouſand years from the preſent time. The pretenſions of the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Phœnicians, or the Chineſe, are decidedly unfounded. The extravagance of the Hindoo chronology has been ſhewn by one well qualified to judge. Thus then we have on our ſide conſiſtence and demonſtration. The oppoſite opinions poſſeſs neither.

From natural let us proceed to moral philoſophy. The origin of phyſical evil has occaſioned much inquiry; and with the Scriptures on this head ſcepticiſm is much diſſatisfied. That the ſtate of human nature is altogether frail and corrupt is undeniable; and to account for this the moſt abſurd and extravagant ſyſtems have been framed, and eſpecially in the various modifications of the oriental philoſophy; a philoſophy, no leſs productive of confuſion to the ancient world, than of injury to the Chriſtian religion. The Scriptures attribute the depravity of the human heart to original ſin, incurred by the tranſgreſſion of the firſt man; but objectors will not admit, that the goodneſs of God would ſuffer the tranſgreſſion of one man to bring miſery on the whole of his ſubſequent race. Such a per-

miſſion, according to their ideas, is incompatible with the acknowledged attributes of divine beneficence. Let us not however attempt to penetrate into thoſe hidden myſteries, which are too intricate for human underſtanding, but which are confirmed by fact and experience. In ſuch ſpeculations men purſue the ſame erroneous plan which they adopt in all their inquiries concerning revealed religion. They meaſure infinity by limited means. The whole may be reduced to a ſimple ſtatement. Death is the lot of all mankind. Evil does exiſt. Sin and death have entered into the world together, and reign over our mortal bodies. For the introduction of moral turpitude, reaſon has never been able to account. Is there then more difficulty in ſuppoſing that theſe exiſting calamities were produced by the tranſgreſſion of the firſt man, than by any other cauſe? The facts cannot be diſputed; and if their origin be deemed as incompatible with our ideas of the mercy of God, the ſame objection will be in force in whatever way we attempt to reconcile them. It is equally extraordinary and unaccountable to us, that this our preſent ſtate ſhould be beſet by ſuch evils. The objection is to its introduction; and the doubt can only be, how far ſuch an admiſſion be reconcileable

to the goodneſs of the Creator. That God is perfect, that he is infinitely wiſe and merciful, is undeniable. None of the objectors have been yet able to deviſe any ſcheme which is ſo ſatisfactory as that which we derive from revelation, and we are better pleaſed to rely on God, than on man; who, if revelation be not true, has nothing to ſubſtitute in its place. To thoſe who buſy themſelves in unprofitable reſearches, we muſt ſay, *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God? canſt thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canſt thou do? deeper than hell; what canſt thou know*[a]*?*

If we proceed to conſider the doctrines revealed in the Moſaic diſpenſation, we find them perfectly agreeable to the beſt ideas which have ever been entertained of the perfections of the Deity. All hiſtory, all fact, all experience, ſhew us, that the propenſity of mankind to idolatry, originating doubtleſs from natural ignorance and depravity, has been exceſſive, univerſal, and incorrigible; and from this extravagant propenſity no nation has ever been free; not even the Jews themſelves. For though God Almighty was pleaſed to work

[a] Job xi. 7, 8.

ſucceſſive miracles to diſplay his power, and to keep them, if poſſible, conſtant to their duty; yet all thoſe manifeſtations of power, all threats, all promiſes, were often ineffectual. They could not be reſtrained from falling occaſionally into the univerſal error; and yet the philoſopher has been fond of extolling the dignity of human nature. Nothing is however more probable, and indeed we have a demonſtration on our ſide, that, had not God been pleaſed, by revelation to earlier ages, to keep a ſenſe of his perfections alive, mankind never would have entertained worthy or true notions of him and of his attributes, antecedent to the coming of Chriſt; and had Chriſt not come, they would not even to the preſent day. It is evident therefore, that whatever degree of knowledge of this kind the world has entertained, is altogether to be attributed to revelation. To the philoſophers of many centuries before Chriſt the ſuggeſtions of natural religion were a light; and ſome of the principles of revelation were tranſmitted to the Pagan world by the traditions of the patriarchs. Nothing is more difficult than to trace the origin and progreſs of ideas. Men are often fond of attributing to their own ſagacity, and their own invention, the accidental

acquiſitions derived from a foreign ſtock. The knowledge of a God of infinite goodneſs and perfection having moſt probably by ſome primitive revelation gone forth, was eaſily communicated, and would in an imperfect degree be intermixed with the general ſentiment of mankind; eſpecially as they had, according to the aſſertion of St. Paul, a law of conſcience written in their hearts. Thus it appears to have been the ſcheme of Providence, that all his diſcoveries and intimations to men ſhould be gradual. Traditions were indiſtinctly opened; then was proclaimed the firſt covenant, then ſucceeded prophecy, by degrees more and more complete and intelligible, till the whole beautiful arrangement was developed; till the *Day Spring from on high* gradually increaſing, burſt forth into the meridian ſplendor of *the Sun of righteouſneſs*. None of the ancient ſyſtems of philoſophy have given a clear or diſtinct account of the one true God, or his attributes. Now the certainty of this alone is of the higheſt importance to mankind. If we examine the declaration of the Moſaic diſpenſation relative to the ſupreme Being, conveyed in all the inſtructions to the children of Iſrael, and all the interpoſitions and revelations of God, we perceive ſuch exalted intimations,

that they fill us at once with admiration and aſtoniſhment. It would be ſuperfluous to illuſtrate theſe by any extracts, ſince they abound in the ſacred writings. Candour muſt admit, that nothing comparable to ſuch repreſentations of the divine nature can be found in any of the profane authors. The probable exiſtence of a ſupreme Being, the Creator of all things, was indeed ſuggeſted by natural religion, but theſe ſuggeſtions were extremely imperfect. It is not alone the pure conception of the Deity which the Hebrew Scriptures diſcloſe; but in all the promiſes propoſed to the Jewiſh nation, as well as in the denunciations of wrath againſt tranſgreſſion, we find the beſt encouragement to virtue, and the greateſt diſcouragement to vice in general. Now idolatry was not only diſhonourable to the reaſon of man, and an affront to the ſupremacy of God, but was productive of the moſt pernicious conſequences to morals. In all the rites of Pagan worſhip we diſcover not only the groſſeſt abſurdity, not only allurements, but every ſtimulus to vice which ſenſuality or ignorance could ſuggeſt. Therefore the heathen gods, in all countries and nations, were propitiated by the commiſſion of the moſt abominable crimes; for even

crimes were eſteemed acceptable to the impure monſters of their worſhip, created by the profligacy and the ſuperſtition of mankind. The nations that bordered on Canaan, as well as its inhabitants, were addicted to religions whoſe ceremonies were of the moſt flagitious nature. Some of theſe worſhipped the ſun, and therefore thought that their children could neither be proſperous in life, nor acceptable to their idols, unleſs they were made to paſs through fire: *They ſhed innocent blood, even the blood of their ſons and daughters,* and ſeduced the credulous children of Iſrael. As Jeremiah laments, *they built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the ſon of Hinnom, to burn their ſons and their daughters in the fire. They built alſo the high places of Baal* [b]. To judge of the cruel nature of theſe rites, it is to be obſerved, that the word Tophet in the Hebrew is derived from an inſtrument by which the prieſts were accuſtomed to drown the cries of the victims. Now compare with this the exalted repreſentations of the divine nature, and of the worſhip acceptable to him, every where expreſſed in the Old Teſtament: *a pure heart and undefiled hands*;

[b] Jer. vii. 31.

mercy rather than ſacrifice. Not only in theſe barbarous nations and barbarous ages were the worſt paſſions and the moſt depraved practice encouraged, but even in nations who boaſted ſuperior knowledge and great refinement, and whom infidels are fond of extolling as worthy of imitation. Whereas the ſacrifices inſtituted by divine appointment, being typical of a future great event, and contrived to intimate and to keep alive an expectation of the fulfilment of the laſt beſt ſacrifice and ſatisfaction, were of the moſt pure and innocent nature. *Wherewithal ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings? Will the Lord be pleaſed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit of my body for the ſin of my ſoul? He hath ſhewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God* [c]. This ſentiment is prevalent throughout the whole of the Old Teſtament, and the prophetical writings abound with the ſame. Thus Iſaiah; *Bring no more vain oblations: incenſe is*

[c] Micah vi. 6, 7, 8.

an abomination unto me; the new moons and ſabbaths, the calling of aſſemblies, I cannot away with [d]. And again, *Waſh you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; ceaſe to do evil; learn to do well; ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow* [e]. And in another place, ſhewing the abſurdity of faſt and penance without good practice, *Is it ſuch a faſt that I have choſen? a day for a man to afflict his ſoul? is it to bow down his head as a bulruſh, and to ſpread ſackcloth and aſhes under him? Wilt thou call this a faſt, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the faſt that I have choſen? to looſe the bands of wickedneſs, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are caſt out to thy houſe? when thou ſeeſt the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own fleſh? Then ſhall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health ſhall ſpring forth ſpeedily: and thy righteouſneſs ſhall go before thee; and the glory of the Lord ſhall be thy rereward* [f]. Again, in the Pſalms

[d] Iſaiah i. 13.
[e] Ver. 16, 17.
[f] Chap. lviii. 5, 6, 7, 8.

we find morality and purity perpetually inculcated. Thus: *Lord, who ſhall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who ſhall reſt upon thy holy hill? Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life, and doeth the thing which is right, and ſpeaketh the truth from his heart* g. Then follows the enumeration of many practical acts of juſtice, and other virtues. It were endleſs to recite the number of paſſages in the Old Teſtament where the true nature of the ſervice which God expects from his creatures is clearly defined.

It is notorious, that in the heathen nations of Greece and of Rome the moſt flagrant vices were the neceſſary rites of initiation into their corrupt myſteries. Let us then draw the contraſt. Did any of the Pagan religions afford ſublime repreſentations of the Deity, or pure precepts of virtue? Yet the precepts of Moſes had a tendency not only to give to men exalted and clear conceptions of the nature of the Deity, but to ameliorate the heart, and to denounce the vengeance of the Almighty on every ſpecies of moral tranſgreſſion. Did the heathen offer human ſacrifices; ſhed the blood of their captives and their ſlaves; nay, even of their own children. The law of Moſes re-

g Pſalm xv. 1, 2.

quired only the blood of the lamb, becauſe the type of him in whom was no ſin, the immaculate and holy one. Did the heathens pollute their temples with ſcenes of guilt and riot, and make even a traffic of debauchery; for this was their common practice. In the Moſaic law, the temple of the Moſt High was, on the contrary, declared to be dedicated to purity. It was the reſidence of the holy of holies, and all pollution, all abomination was conſidered defilement to the ſacred place. Did the law of Moſes preſcribe or permit immorality. Were not all the flagitious practices of the Gentiles repreſented as the objects of deteſtation, and the means of defilement? Is not the infatuation of thoſe aſtoniſhing, who look on the religion of the old covenant with averſion, while no reſentment is felt at the abſurd and diſguſting inſtitutions of Polytheiſm? It is even probable, that idolatry was not in itſelf ſo offenſive to God becauſe it robbed him of his worſhip, but becauſe it corrupted morals. The worſhip of imperfect beings can add to the glory of God in no other way than by the promotion of univerſal righteouſneſs.

The Jews have been called a barbarous and ignorant people, unſkilled in art, avaricious, and addicted to the moſt groſs ſuperſtition.

That they were not without ſkill in the arts of life, is apparent from the various circumſtances of their hiſtory; the building of the ark and the temple. Of Solomon it is declared, he was well verſed in natural knowledge; and the acquiſition of the Jews in art or ſcience was perhaps nearly, if not equally, advanced with that of the nations of the ſame age. For, after all, to what did the knowledge of the ancient world amount? Some arts ſeem to have flouriſhed, which ſubſequent ages have loſt; but natural knowledge was always in a very confined ſtate; it was the ſuperſtition of philoſophy, grounded on conjecture, not on experiment. What was the aſtronomy of Egypt or Chaldea formed on? Syſtems now well known to be abſolutely falſe. It is therefore a great miſtake to conſider the Iſraelites as comparatively barbarous, or ignorant. But if it be granted, that the children of Iſrael were a barbarous race, this circumſtance would of itſelf be an argument in favour of revelation. For it is inconſiſtent to ſuppoſe illiterate and uncultivated men, unaided by divine inſtruction, to be capable of entertaining ſuch ſublime and clear ideas of God as the Jewiſh Scriptures contain, and which were never diſcovered by more civilized people. Compare the produc-

tions of Greece and Rome in the higheſt ſtate of the arts; and what ſhall we find in them, however excellent in other reſpects as models of compoſition, that can at all rival the Hebrew Scriptures, when the majeſty, the mercy, or the holineſs of the Deity are diſplayed? It is in theſe ſacred writings that we ſee alſo the pureſt morality inculcated; not indeed brought to ſuch a ſtate of perfection as in the Goſpel, but ſtill eminently ſuperior to the precepts of all cotemporary or known religions. For here it is neceſſary to ſeparate the tenets of philoſophy from ſacred inſtitutions. It has been already remarked, that philoſophers were indifferent to the practice of the world out of their own immediate ſchools, and that the religion of the ancient world ſeems not to have had any immediate connection with virtue. Men were indeed taught to appeaſe their deities, and to court their favour. How? By rites and ceremonies; by oblations and ſacrifices. Such indeed were preſcribed by God under the old covenant, but it was ever explicitly proclaimed and univerſally underſtood, that theſe did not diſpenſe with the obligations of moral duty. If then no conceptions of natural religion were ever ſo clear, no declarations ſo expreſs, as are evident in the Jewiſh

revelation, is it not to be concluded that the Scriptures muſt have derived their origin from a ſource ſuperior to human ?

If while many inſtitutions are to be found in the Jewiſh laws and precepts that are evidently excellent, ſome it muſt be confeſſed there are for which we cannot account. In reaſoning on theſe we ought to conſider them as far as poſſible with all their relations. Here indeed our judgment will be imperfect, becauſe we cannot ſee the tendency of the whole ſcheme which is embraced by the unlimited providence of the divine Author. We muſt remember however, that of theſe many were peculiarly adapted to extraordinary circumſtances; to a people who were deſigned to be unconſciouſly, and often reluctantly, the inſtruments of preſerving the knowledge of the true God, of juſtice, and morality in a corrupt and perverſe world. As the knowledge and virtue of an individual will degenerate unleſs it have ſome example, unleſs it be preſerved from contamination by conſtant vigilance; ſo it is with nations, and with the whole race; for, unleſs ſome principles of renovation be given to the moral conſtitution, it will decay like the phyſical. The law of natural conſcience kept the Gentile world from total

corruption. Under the Chriſtian diſpenſation we have a renovating principle, the gift of grace: and I would draw this inference, that had it not pleaſed God to preſerve mankind by that ſilent but irreſiſtible voice of conſcience from total degeneracy, that law which was written in their hearts, the world would unavoidably, by the conſtitution of things, have fallen into an irrecoverable ſtate of depravity. Yet if natural religion could enable us to acquire notions of morality, we ought never to loſe ſight of this conſideration, that nothing but revelation can ſanction the principles of juſtice and virtue among men. On the motives of natural religion they will be only a temporal convenience, adapted entirely to the improvement or accommodations of temporal life. Revelation is the bond which unites man to God, and connects our preſent intereſts with eternity.

Beſides the excellent tendency of the Moſaic inſtitution to preſerve a true ſenſe of the unity and perfections of God, which is a ſtrong internal evidence of its origin, we may further obſerve, that it contained much encouragement to benevolence; notwithſtanding that it preſcribed many diſtinctions which appear to be ſupercilious. The unlimited law of

univerſal charity was promulgated more fully under the Goſpel covenant: yet ſtrangers under the old law were not altogether excluded from participating in the benefits of religion and common rites. The law admitted proſelytes of the gate, as they were then called; and all the preſcriptions of the old covenant were founded on a moral and religious neceſſity, rather to exclude the contamination of heathen ceremonies, than ſocial intercourſe; and was a neceſſity ſomewhat ſimilar to that which the law of ſelf-preſervation compels men to adopt in preventing the contact of epidemical diſeaſe. It preſcribed at the ſame time ſeveral charitable inſtitutions; ſuch as the charge recommended to the owners and keepers of the harveſt, that the grain ſhould not be collected with ſcrupulous parſimony, but that the poor gleaner might in quiet and with facility enjoy his portion.

The injunction given to the Iſraelites to poſſeſs the land of Canaan has been conſidered as oppreſſive and unjuſt. To this the common and obvious anſwer is ſufficient, that Providence undeniably does frequently make uſe of human inſtruments in the moral government of the world. And in this inſtance the enormous impiety, and the profligacy of theſe peo-

ple, loudly invoked divine puniſhment. But it muſt be remembered, that on all other occaſions the wars of the Jews were defenſive; and they were expreſsly forbidden to enlarge their territories by the invaſion of their neighbours. If the command of God then obliged them to act offenſively as his inſtruments of wrath in a particular inſtance, and if the ſame law prohibited them in all others, this concluſion muſt at leaſt follow, that this ſolitary injunction was an evident proof of particular interpoſition. Now ſuppoſe the command to have been from heaven, which we believe, did not this eſtabliſh the right? All law is derived from ſome ſupreme power. If the Bible be at all true, it was God himſelf who promiſed and gave them poſſeſſion. Their ſubſequent employment was agriculture, the moſt uſeful and the moſt innocent of all the purſuits of man. It muſt be confeſſed, that war and conqueſt, abſtractedly conſidered, appear ſuch horrid inſtruments, as to be inconſiſtent with the mercy of the Deity; and ſo are diſeaſe and death. Yet, as all men are ſubject to theſe evils, we muſt conſider them on the whole as mercies. Thus if the human frame be ſubject to the injuries of time, death is a remedy for phyſical ſuffering; pain is the index, and the faithful

centinel of danger. And if death be gain, diſeaſe is the friend that conducts us to the gate that opens to everlaſting bliſs. To inflict ſuffering then on the human race is a merciful act of providence, if the ſuffering of the incorrigible lead others to repentance. Life and death are in the hands of God; and are entirely at his diſpoſal. There is no law of nature which exempts us from evil. If war were univerſally enjoined as a precept of religion, it would indeed form an objection to it: but ſince God is ſometimes pleaſed to deſtroy by famine, by earthquake, or peſtilence, we cannot object to any other mode which the divine wiſdom may deviſe of puniſhing a guilty world. The whole objection muſt lie, not againſt the puniſhment, but the mode of its execution. Now of this the Almighty can alone determine. For if we murmur at the infliction of phyſical evil, we have reaſon to murmur at the whole courſe of providence, which is conſtituted on the certainty of its exiſtence. An injunction to deſtroy is indeed ſuſpicious, when there is no evidence of its coming from God; but the certainty of the evidence of the injunction removes all cauſe of objection.

To conclude the conſideration of the inſtitu-

tions of the firſt covenant, that of the ſabbath is alone a ſufficient proof of a divine origin; an inſtitution moſt admirably calculated to keep a ſenſe of religion alive; an inſtitution ſo important to ſociety at large, and to the ſpiritual intereſts of individuals in particular, that it may be conſidered as a moſt invaluable bleſſing. It is the bond of religious ſociety; the ſanctifier of public order and tranquillity; the anticipater of heaven, and the guardian of individual grace and holineſs. The univerſal violation of it would bring anarchy and deſtruction on a nation, and always terminates in the debauchery and ruin of individuals. The obſervance brings bleſſing and proſperity, and does more for public and private happineſs than worldly wealth, or any temporal ſucceſs.

It is objected to the ſelection which God was pleaſed to make of the Iſraelites, as inſtruments of his providence, that they were a ſmall and inconſiderable people, and that they were altogether unworthy of his peculiar favour. This may be readily granted, and yet be no ground of objection; and indeed this is urged by Moſes himſelf, when he exhorts them to obedience: *The Lord did not ſet his love on you, and chooſe you, becauſe ye were more in*

number than any people, for ye were the feweſt of all people [h].

Of the inſtruments of Providence it is abſurd to judge by our conceptions. The agency of men is evidently ſubject to his control, and what they deſign for evil purpoſes he converts to good. In the preſent ſyſtem of things, no marked diſtinction is made of good or evil, only in their general effect. The ſun ſhines and the rain falls alike on the juſt and the unjuſt. Nothing can be more clear, than that profane and profligate men are undeſerving of the bounties of Providence; and there is as much reaſon to ſay of temporal bleſſings. Yet God is pleaſed to ſuffer them to enjoy much more than they merit: and why then ſhould not the Jews have been choſen for the diſplay of divine wiſdom? In the Scripture, this people is never repreſented as the choſen or peculiar people of God for any merit of their own: on the contrary, in all his expoſtulations with them, God is repreſented as upbraiding them with their rebellion againſt an election ſo very extraordinary. They, it appears, were employed contrary to their own choice. Perpetual interpoſition was neceſſary to coerce and

[h] Deut. vii. 7.

keep them to the ſervice of the true God; and their very reluctant obedience tended to the more open manifeſtation of the divine goodneſs and glory. That the Jews then were an inconſiderable people, is an argument of Moſes; but he makes a very different uſe of it. He employs it to awaken them to obedience, and to induce them to repoſe a truſt in that great Being, the diſpenſer of ſo many bleſſings. It may be alſo urged, that our bleſſed Lord made uſe of ignorant fiſhermen as inſtruments to promulgate Chriſtianity. Now that God ſhould employ inconſiderable agents, is conſonant with all the events both of nature and of human life.

To prove the conſiſtence of the holy Scriptures, we may aſſert, that they form the beſt ſources of ancient hiſtory. When we examine the books of the Old Teſtament, we obſerve that the writers, even ſuppoſing it to have been a human work, are good hiſtorians, and were ſpectators of many of the facts they have recorded. They appeal to circumſtances ſeen by multitudes. We muſt be ſtruck with the ſimplicity of the narration, and with the marks of truth they exhibit. We ſee the conformity of the chronology of the holy Scriptures with that of profane hiſtory; nay, they even ſerve

to correct the errors of the latter. We see a surprising harmony between these books and the most valued historians, such as Josephus and others. The books of the Old Testament alone afford us an accurate history of the world from the creation, through the line of patriarchs, judges, kings, and rulers of the Hebrews. By their aid we may form almost an uninterrupted series of events down to the birth of Christ or Augustus, a space of about four thousand years, or even beyond. If a few interruptions occur, these are easily supplied by profane history. Such reflections must strike us as very extraordinary proofs of the agreement of the whole relation with truth. If it be said, that this book contains some contradictions, we have these well reconciled by several persons of ability.

Every improvement in science confirms the evidences of the Scriptures. Astronomy gives its support; so that not only the sun by day, and the splendid luminaries of the night, but every law of the celestial orbs, declares the glory of God. The heavens themselves at once prove his being, display his workmanship, and establish the truth of his divine word. Profane history contributes to confirm the truth of sacred; and, learning as it advances, clears ob-

ſcurity and elucidates truth. There have been generally ſtanding memorials of great events; but the memorials of the events of ſacred hiſtory bear this remarkable character, that they were eſtabliſhed at the very time of the facts, and were inſtituted in remembrance of them. Thus all the Jewiſh rites, whether circumciſion, the feaſt of the paſſover, the ſabbath, the delivery of the law, were all appointed at the very time of the tranſaction; and ſucceeding generations acted on the teſtimony of their forefathers, who were preſent at the time of the tranſaction, and recorded it to poſterity. For it is a ſtrong argument of the truth and the conſiſtence of revelation, that the principal inſtances recorded in the Jewiſh hiſtory of the miraculous acts of God performed through his human inſtruments, were very public; and that the inſtitutions which aroſe out of them were adopted at the ſame time, and by the very perſons who were the ſpectators. We have no greater evidence of any hiſtorical tranſaction. Here then, on the one ſide, we are to place well authenticated facts; on the other, ſpeculative conjecture and groundleſs objection.

It is remarked of the Moſaic inſtitutions, that they propoſe temporal promiſes, and that

they allude not to the rewards of a future life. Hence ſome have concluded, that a future ſtate of reward or puniſhment made no part of the motives propoſed to the children of Iſrael. It muſt however be remembered, that temporal promiſes were peculiarly adapted to the ſtate of the Iſraelites, and therefore that they are more ſtrongly enforced. But was it not the ſole object of the law to prepare the Iſraelites for the expectation of him, who was to bring life and immortality to light? The hope of life and immortality was therefore, with the ſame conſiſtence of deſign, gradually developed. To this nature itſelf pointed; in this the patriarchs truſted. A future ſtate of exiſtence was ever the hope of the Gentile world. Our bleſſed Lord did not advance, he confirmed the doctrine. With this view we are to look at the conſiſtence of the Goſpel covenant. Many paſſages of the Old Teſtament ſhew that it was a general belief of thoſe times. What ſaid Iſaiah? *The ſun ſhall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightneſs ſhall the moon give light unto thee; but the Lord ſhall be unto thee an everlaſting light, and thy God thy glory* [i]. There are many ſimilar de-

[i] Iſaiah lx. 19.

clarations, which prove that the world was never without ſuch an expectation. It was the general belief of the Phariſees before our Lord appeared. Neither did our Saviour aſſert that he was the firſt publiſher of the doctrine; nor did the people receive it as new.

On the whole then, we have the ſtrongeſt evidence of the truth of the doctrines promulgated by Moſes. If we examine them minutely, difficulties may indeed ariſe. But it is conſiſtent with the declarations of Scripture that ſuch ſhould exiſt; for here we are to *know only in part.* But let us take an enlarged and a comprehenſive view. Let us obſerve a ſeries and concurrence of the moſt ſplendid and miraculous events, detached in themſelves, but great in their object; uniform in their relations, gradual in their advance, and perfect in their completion. If ſome things be incomprehenſible and obſcure, they are the hidden things of an incomprehenſible God. If ſome of the agents employed ſeem to us imperfect in their conduct, this ſeeming objection is an evidence of the veracity and candour of the hiſtorian. All time, all events, the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles, have been employed in preparing a degenerate race for the

grand and ultimate object, the promiſed Meſſiah, who was to take away ſin, and reconcile us to God.

LECTURE IV.

JOHN i. 17.

For the law was given by Moſes; but grace and truth came by Jeſus Chriſt.

FROM the conſideration of the firſt covenant we are naturally led on to the ſecond, in which we ſhall obſerve the ſame conſiſtency of deſign. Now if it can be made to appear, as was obſerved of the Moſaic diſpenſation, that the doctrines of the New Teſtament contain any propoſition, or recommend any practice, contrary to the received opinions of the attributes of God, this would be a reaſonable cauſe of objection. But if a revelation contain all the characters of divinity which natural reaſon has agreed to be the attributes of God, then it comes impreſſed with the marks of its true origin. Reaſon however is not to be the canon of faith, but the meaſure of it. As the corporeal eye perceives external objects by the aid of natural light, ſo, by the help of reaſon, ſpiritual light communicates perception of celeſtial things to the ſoul.

The fundamental doctrine of the Scripture is, that as by the offence of the firſt man ſin and death entered into the world, ſo by the righteouſneſs of the ſecond God was reconciled, for the ſentence of condemnation had paſſed over all. As man is by nature, as well as by tranſgreſſion, inadequate to atonement; atonement for offence was offered in the perſon of the Son, and that atonement accepted; ſo that, on the condition of faith and repentance through Chriſt, perfect reconciliation may be obtained. The mercy of God the Father is the primary and original cauſe, and the mercy and compaſſion of God the Son the means, who offered himſelf for us; and made a full, perfect, and ſufficient oblation and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world. He is called the Saviour, the Mediator, the Author and Finiſher of our ſalvation. St. Paul thus ſums up the doctrine; *For when we were yet without ſtrength, in due time Chriſt died for the ungodly.—But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet ſinners Chriſt died for us. Much more then, being now juſtified by his blood, we ſhall be ſaved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we ſhall*

be ſaved by his life. And not only ſo, but we alſo joy in God, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom we have now received the atonement. Wherefore, as by one man ſin entered into the world; and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned.—Nevertheleſs death reigned from Adam to Moſes, even over them that had not ſinned after the ſimilitude of Adam's tranſgreſſion, who is the figure of him that was to come.—For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteouſneſs, ſhall reign in life by one, Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even ſo by the righteouſneſs of one the free gift came upon all men unto juſtification of life. For as by one man's diſobedience many were made ſinners; ſo by the obedience of one ſhall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound: but where ſin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as ſin hath reigned unto death, even ſo might grace reign through righteouſneſs unto eternal life, by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord[k]. This account is in itſelf clear and intelligible;

[k] Romans, chap. v.

but many queſtions have ariſen out of it, from diverſity of opinion, which have been the cauſes of endleſs diſpute. Error is of luxuriant growth, and propagates abundantly. Wherever men are not content with the plain declarations of the Scriptures, but are deſirous of underſtanding that which it is impoſſible ſhould be made clear to human apprehenſion, the natural conſequence muſt be infinite perplexity. In the Scriptures the gracious providence of God is called a myſtery; as indeed all that relates to him, all that he does, his wiſdom and his mercy, his power and his goodneſs, as well as the works of his hands, are all myſterious. But we muſt make a diſtinction between the myſteries inſeparable from the eſſence of divinity, and thoſe which the vanity, the abſurd curioſity, and the weakneſs of man, are for ever aiming to create. The declarations of God are plain. It is clear that man may offend; that God may be diſpleaſed; that a Saviour may purchaſe redemption for us. But when we forſake the plain ſenſe of Scripture, and ſubſtitute our own fallible reaſoning, we forſake a clear and direct path for the mazes of intricacy. Then our light is turned into darkneſs.

One of the great and peculiar principles of

the Chriſtian religion is that reciprocal love between God and man which it inculcates. It gives the moſt poſitive aſſurance of the affection of the ſupreme Being for all his creatures, and demands from the creature, in return, every poſſible degree of reverence and regard towards the Creator. No religion that has obtained any influence over the world has declared the Almighty to be ſo immediately and deeply intereſted in the welfare of mankind. None of the heathen ſyſtems ever repreſented the Author of nature in ſo engaging a light; yet this is perfectly conſonant to reaſon. Equally ſo is it that the leading principle of religious obedience on the part of man ſhould be love: for both theſe repreſentations of the affection of God for his creatures, and the duties which ought to flow from the conviction of ſuch obligations on the mind of man, are analogous to our preſent ſtate. The natural affection of parents for their offſpring is a moſt powerful principle of action; and the beſt and moſt acceptable return they receive, is that obedience which ſprings from motives of love. The Almighty, by the Chriſtian revelation, is repreſented to us as the univerſal, the beneficent parent of mankind. His ſuperintendence is ever actively employed for our

good; his wiſdom in contriving the means, and his power in producing it. The viſible works of God are providentially deſigned to operate for the uſe of man. For him the earth is abundant in vegetation and animal life. The air replete with health. All that can delight the external ſenſes, all that can gratify the natural wants of our preſent ſtate, is abundantly beſtowed on us. But above all, infinitely above all, is our gratitude invited and claimed by that aſtoniſhing inſtance of almighty affection, in the revelation of his will; in the miſſion of his beloved Son; and in his offers of eternal happineſs and glory.

Theſe obligations are analogous to our preſent relations in life. The force of human love, whether parental or of inferior degrees, is weakened by abſence, and diminiſhed by deſcent. Parents commonly love their children with a ſtronger affection than children entertian for their parents. The paſſion grows weaker in every branch of human connection. In the ſame manner the love of the Almighty is infinitely greater than the love of any earthly parent. There is certainly no motive of human action more difficult to be preſerved in a regular and conſtant ſtate than this of loving

God; becauſe his perfections are not the object of ſenſe. Yet we are influenced by the ſentiments of our nature to ſeek our own good; and thoſe pleaſing and benevolent affections, which ſerve to ſoothe and ſoften the evils of life, which conſtitute the higheſt poſſible ſtate of human happineſs, if ſublimed by conſtant meditation, will ultimately lead us to the knowledge of that great and good Being, who alone can gratify the wiſhes, and complete the ſubſtantial, the unfading happineſs of the rational ſoul.

From the Chriſtian diſpenſation alone have we acquired any exhortation to the love of the Deity. This is a principle altogether unknown to all ancient religions or philoſophy. It is remarkable, that in all the Pagan ſyſtems of paſt, and even of the preſent age, fear has been the motive of divine worſhip. Under falſe religions men have ſerved God becauſe they dreaded his power, and were apprehenſive of his vengeance. The Chriſtian diſpenſation propoſes its threatenings only to ſinners; but invites the good by the ſofteſt perſuaſion. It endeavours to excite us by amiable affections; and as attraction is a great, yet gentle agent of the natural world, love is the ſofteſt principle that draws the ſoul towards God. The Scrip-

tures ſay, where there is perfect love there is no fear. *Perfect love caſteth out fear.* It repreſents the Almighty as a liberal benefactor, and a moſt affectionate parent. It therefore claims the debt of gratitude. *We love God,* ſays St. John, *becauſe he firſt loved us*; and in claiming every affection of the heart, it proceeds on this excellent and moſt reaſonable principle, that *to love God is to keep his commandments.*

The ſacred writings have been explicit in providing us with the means of proving our integrity in the practice of this duty, which are no leſs comprehenſive than they are infallible. The love of God is ſaid to conſiſt in obeying his commands from a deſire of rendering ourſelves pleaſing to him. Our motive of practical virtue muſt therefore be a preference for good; becauſe it is acceptable to that great Being who is the object of our moſt ſincere affection; and this is not only the moſt certain teſt of our reſolution, but it is alſo the beſt ſecurity againſt ſin.

As the deſign which the Chriſtian ſcheme propoſes is of the firſt importance, it is conſiſtent with the moſt exalted attributes of a Deity. To advance the intellectual nature of man, to improve his moral faculties, and to

render him fit for a better ſtate of enjoyment, to enable him to grow in grace here, and to arrive at perfection of goodneſs and happineſs hereafter, are the ultimate objects of all that revelation promiſes; and this deſign is conſiſtent with our beſt conceptions of infinite wiſdom and infinite goodneſs. In promoting theſe it diſplays the care of the ſupreme Being for his creatures. It diſplays an intereſt antecedent to creation, and exerted without intermiſſion from age to age. To this grand deſign a ſeries of extraordinary events uniformly contributes. Nothing, however minute, is in reality of ſmall importance; nothing is irregular or diſcordant. With this view the ſyſtem of the world was framed. Heaven is intereſted. God the Father ſacrifices his only and beloved Son: God the Son becomes the voluntary ſacrifice; and the Spirit of God ſanctifies the whole. Time is employed in the completion of the ſcheme, and eternity is to ſupply exhauſtleſs mercies. To this all the tranſactions of the world evidently contribute, and to this end they uniformly concur. Prophecy predicts, and events realize the prediction. The powers of this world are unconſciouſly or even reluctantly inſtrumental. Whether empires riſe, or kingdoms fall; whether the juſt ſuffer,

or the wicked triumph; whether ſaints are martyred, or infidels perſecute; ſtill the kingdom of Chriſt is advancing. The gates of hell cannot prevail againſt it, and even death itſelf is ſwallowed up in victory. Yet here ungrateful and ſullen Infidelity offers its objections.—Why did God permit man to fall? Why not preſerve him by a ſuperintendent coercion? Is not this a counteraction of the firſt deſign?—The anſwer muſt be, that it is impoſſible for finite reaſon to comprehend how far omniſcience and omnipotence may concur; how far omnipotence may chooſe to become ſubject to contingencies. But we ought to acknowledge the mercy propoſed, and cheerfully to accept it, becauſe it comes to us with all the marks of conſiſtent analogy. We might with equal reaſon object to the uſe of food, becauſe we know not exactly how it operates in the ſyſtem to afford nutriment. We might alſo refrain from it on the ſame ground, becauſe God has not ſo created us as to exiſt without the neceſſity of this perpetual renovation. In the production of theſe great events we ſee the apparatus ſplendid, and the more ſubordinate parts conſiſtent: all like the works of God; all analogous to his operations in nature. Is there any ſyſtem of religion in which the

deſign is ſo uniformly progreſſive, and the events ſo admirably effective? In compariſon of this, how mean are the pretenſions of the Arabian prophet! the ſuperſtition of the Hindoo! the abſurdities of the polytheiſm of Greece and of Rome! Indeed all are too mean to be put in competition.

If we attend to the threats and rewards which the Chriſtian religion propoſes, we find that they are merely conditional. It preſſes none into its ſervice who are not voluntary diſciples. It is not a plan of coercion, but of co-operation. For God only worketh together with thoſe who themſelves work. All is left to the determination and the conduct of the will. It proclaims no neceſſity but a freedom of action, and calls us to the glorious liberty of the ſons of God. It ſpeaks of this life as a ſtate of trial; and while we are exhorted to reſiſt temptation, we are taught to expect it. We are to experience wars without, and fightings within. All this ſuppoſes us not exempt from the ſufferings of other men, but we are even expoſed to greater trials. The divine grace is to be our aid, and the holy Spirit our comforter; but though the aſſiſtance is ſupernatural, its action is gentle, and perceptible only in its effects. We are told, that we muſt

act as ordinary men, and engage as ſuch in the general ſyſtem of life. If Chriſtians therefore prove better than other men, it muſt proceed from their own application of the grace beſtowed by Heaven. It is indeed reaſonably to be expected that men will act as men, becauſe all this is foretold, and againſt all this are we not frequently forewarned? The world and its intereſts are powerful; and though God could force men into virtue, that would be to deſtroy its merit. And as the motives of Chriſtianity are not coercive, and its operation on the mind gentle, its progreſs muſt be expected to be gradual.

Having conſidered ſome of the principal characteriſtics of the Chriſtian religion, let us now proceed to its internal evidences. Of the ſuperiority of the writings of the Old Teſtament in their ſublime repreſentations of the Deity, and the moral ſtate of man, we have treated. We muſt now proceed to conſider the conſiſtence and the internal evidence of the writings included in what is called the New Teſtament, in which we ſhall perceive the ſame wonderful accordance and ſuperiority.

Whoever attentively and impartially peruſes them, muſt obſerve the moſt deciſive marks of internal authenticity. This character, though

obvious in the books of the Old Teſtament, is more peculiarly ſo in thoſe of the New. By authenticity here I mean, not only the genuine ſigns of the ſtyle of the writers, but that evident character, that colour and teſtimony of truth, which always carries with it a commanding and irreſiſtible authority: all this too corroborated by circumſtances both external and collateral. Of the external proofs of the authenticity of the holy Scriptures it does not fall within my province to treat. This ſubject has received the moſt ample and ſatisfactory teſtimony from many able writers. There is no hiſtory which affords ſuch impreſſive demonſtration, while the more important and ſubordinate parts contribute to general ſupport and confirmation. In conſidering the conſiſtency of the ſacred Scriptures, an appeal muſt be made to the candid mind. To ſuch, a few inſtances of apparent diſcordance will not be a formidable objection, even if found in the books of the Evangeliſts. Theſe have been again and again rectified by competent defenders. And ſhould their attempts at reconciliation not appear in every inſtance altogether ſatisfactory, yet theſe variations in the narrative, which may thus ſeem not fully adjuſted, though the greater part are clearly ex-

plained, cannot raiſe any material objection, unleſs with thoſe who are diſpoſed to magnify every ſcruple. With ſuch indeed there is no reaſoning. To dwell on trivial objections is the poor employment of minute criticiſm. Theſe ſlight incongruities muſt impreſs us with a conviction of the veracity of the narrators. They prove that no colluſion could have exiſted between them, and that they did not conſpire to deceive.

It would be impoſſible to enter into a diſcuſſion on this ſubject within our preſcribed limits. It is only propoſed at preſent to obſerve, that in the Goſpels and Acts of the Apoſtles there is ſuch an agreement with all circumſtances of the contemporary cuſtoms and manners, that it gives the moſt lively colour of probability to the facts which are related.

Let us conſider the difficulties of fiction. The greateſt effort of human genius is delineation of individual character. To diſcriminate this amid various combinations, and to preſerve it whole, "ſimplex et unum," in a ſucceſſion of changing circumſtances, requires extraordinary powers of mind. In compariſon with this, general deſcription, however ſublime, is inferior, becauſe generalities may ſtrike the ruder ages, and require no nice diſtinction or obſervation.

In combination of peculiarities the greateſt poets and hiſtorians have excelled; for this demands exquiſite knowledge of the paſſions, and their mode of operation in all the verſatilities and occurrences of life. It is in this power that the father of poets is ſo eminent, and in which his Roman imitator is inferior. The heroes of the former are not only great, but they are depicted with all the diſtinct peculiarities and marks, and colour and ſhades, of individual likeneſs. The effect of this power is to give an air of probability even to fiction. Yet in the fabulous works of human genius inconſiſtency will ever be found. But the admirable and clear manner, by which the ſeveral characters introduced in the Goſpel hiſtory are marked and preſerved, muſt forcibly ſtrike us. Such accuracy human invention could never attain. It is obvious that the writers differ materially from each other in ſtyle, in language, and even in their mode of thinking. They ſhew not the leaſt attempt at concealment even of their own characters, weakneſſes, miſconceptions, or errors; and yet they wonderfully concur in all their deſcriptions of the manners and characters of others. In all this there is the evident ſtamp of genuine ſimplicity and truth. We muſt infer, that they were

animated by the ſame ſpirit. In the fictitious delineation of a perfect character there is no difficulty. The natural inſipidity of ſuch a picture renders it eaſily attainable by writers of the meaneſt capacity. To paint the undaunted hero, or the blameleſs man, requires neither talent or effort of the mind. But when human genius is employed in delineating the character of divinity, it ſinks under the weight of the ſubject, and all its faculties become paralyſed. Yet we ſee the four Evangeliſts, who were originally illiterate, delineating the Redeemer of mankind, in whoſe perſon divinity and human feelings were myſteriouſly blended, with ſuch ſublime ſimplicity, with ſuch faithful unity of character, with ſuch ſucceſs, and ſuch equal and coincidental harmony, as is truly aſtoniſhing, and beſpeaks an excellence altogether unrivalled and more than mortal. We behold a portrait that raiſes ideas of the utmoſt perfection, that inſpires the deepeſt reverence, and fills the mind with conceptions far above human. Does our Lord exert his miraculous powers; how godlike is that operation! how great the effect! Does he call the dead from the ſilent tomb, and exclaim, I ſay unto thee, Awake—ariſe; does he ſtill the raging of the ſtormy waves, and exclaim, Peace, be ſtill; how

ſublime is the expreſſion! And how is this related which ſtrikes us with ſuch wonderful force? In a manner the moſt ſimple; in language the moſt unadorned, yet forcible, convincing, and inimitable. All is unaffected, yet all grand in the extreme. Accordingly we read, "Fear and aſtoniſhment fell on all that heard, "and on all that beheld." It is not intended. in theſe obſervations, to conſider the ſacred Scriptures as efforts of compoſition, but to ſhew how infinitely ſuperior they are, how far more ſucceſsful than the moſt arduous labours of human genius. We have here the ſtrongeſt internal evidence that the facts are genuine, ſince no fiction could produce ſuch harmony. We find four ſeparate writers concurring to delineate the expreſs image and brightneſs of the Father, the awful tranſactions of incarnate divinity. Here we muſt confeſs powers far more tranſcendent than any which have ever aſtoniſhed and delighted the world. This character of dignified ſimplicity; this harmony and conſiſtence, which conſtitute the ſigns of a nature more than human, is in no inſtance more admirably and perfectly diſplayed than in the character of our bleſſed Lord himſelf. How ſhall we be able to ſum up the many exemplifications of excellence which united to

form this perfect whole? When we view the Son of God divested of the glory which he had with the Father before the world; when we see him in the likeness of man, subject to our sufferings and partaker of our infirmities; when we compare him with all those illustrious characters who have given splendour to history, and who have laboured to render themselves models of human perfection; when we view him opposed to all who have proudly assumed the name of philosophers, and have studied to render themselves examples of virtue; how does the Son of the Highest rise in the comparison! How do they sink! How glorious, how great, how manifest his superiority! How evident their imperfection! In the most eminent of the ancient philosophers there is an evident affectation of singularity. How unequal are their pretensions! Their virtues are mingled with many imperfections; their conceptions tinctured with absurdity; their charity narrowed by a spirit of contention; their disputes conducted with a supercilious desire of victory, rather than of truth. How full of ostentation are their precepts! True excellence possesses indeed a consciousness of superiority, but it is always tempered with the most unassuming meekness. This is one of the strongest marks

of intellectual preeminence. How conſpicuous is this in all the works, the conduct, in all the diſcourſe of the bleſſed Jeſus! With the faireſt and the beſt pretence to the applauſe of mankind, he ſought only to give glory to God. In delivering his admirable leſſons he ſpoke indeed as *one who had authority* and *as never man ſpake;* yet his ſole object was, not to win the admiration, but to promote the ſalvation of mankind. He ſought no praiſe, no glory for himſelf. All was done from motives of a higher kind. Sometimes his cenſures were ſevere. But even this is a proof of the dignity of his character. Having an authority infinitely higher than human, knowing the hearts and the very thoughts, he could not but diſcern who merited his reprehenſions, and how great were the enormities of offenders. Here mildneſs would have been inconſiſtent with the dignity of his miſſion; and, while he underſtood more than man, he could not but act as the intimate of heaven. While therefore with an omnipotent arm he controls all nature, animate or inanimate, nay the grave itſelf hears his voice, yet he diſclaims all glory for himſelf. How aſtoniſhing is his humility! how immutable his goodneſs! how amiable his compaſſion! how dignified his

whole character and deportment! In all he did, in all he ſaid, we ſee the example of the perfection which men ought to endeavour to imitate; though human nature can never attain it So aſtoniſhing are the proofs of his power, that to ſuppoſe him merely man appears inconſiſtent with ſuch extraordinary gifts. The whole of his addreſſes to the Father, and all the declarations he makes of himſelf, give us reaſon to apprehend, that the union between him and the Father is of a myſterious and intimate nature. They give us reaſon to apprehend, that his power was not merely delegated, but inherent. Though he had many diſciples, yet he did not form them into a ſchool to exalt his name; on the contrary, he told them, that his ſayings were too hard for them to underſtand. He taught rather for mankind than for them, and they were only enlightened when they were to behold his face no more. So far was he from aſſuming the character of a leader, that he foretold them, that his death would be neceſſary for the confirmation of his doctrines. To ſuffer for truth has indeed been the fate of many innocent perſons; but then death was not neceſſary for the confirmation of their doctrines. The death of Socrates gave time for prejudice to ſubſide, and for deliberation to

aſcertain the injuſtice of his condemnation. In this too was manifeſted the innocence of Jeſus, and the iniquity of his accuſers. But did the diſciples of Socrates, from the circumſtance of his death, conſequently acquire new light, or better comprehend his inſtructions? Our Lord told his diſciples, that another teacher would come, the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, who ſhould teach them all things. His doctrines became more luminous, even when he could no longer teach; and he could obtain only poſthumous praiſe. His doctrines were never delivered in writing, but were left to float on the mind of the hearers till they ſhould be fixed by the irreſiſtible impulſe of the divine Spirit. Mahomet attentively compiled his Koran; but our bleſſed Lord left his inſtructions to the care of Almighty Providence; they were to be tranſmitted by ſpiritual inſcription, not only to the ſight, but to be written in the heart. To ſum up the whole, we find that the character of our Lord is in perfect conformity with all the predictions relative to the promiſed Meſſiah.

But further, the ſame conſiſtence is apparent in the deſcription of the characters of the diſciples, as delivered to us by the Evangeliſts. Before they had received the gift of the holy

Spirit, we perceive them, in every tranſaction, acting as uneducated men, and in their converſation and ideas we may trace all the common prejudices of ignorant minds. Yet in theſe there is a variety of character. Peter is ſanguine and vehement; Thomas incredulous and obſtinate; John meek and affectionate. In Peter is contraſted a timidity in the hour of danger, and a weakneſs under trial. This is extremely natural; for ſanguine tempers generally fall into the oppoſite extreme under a change of circumſtances. Hence his flight when our Lord was about to be apprehended, and his ſubſequent denial of his Maſter; following after him at a diſtance, though he had ſeveral times ſworn to die with him. The ſame characters they in ſome meaſure retained after the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt; though that great event inſpired them with extraordinary powers and very different and more elevated ſentiments. Yet we ſtill diſtinguiſh the prevalence of natural habit. In ſome of the incidental perſons of the ſacred hiſtory we trace the ſame diſcrimination of character. Martha, the ſiſter of Lazarus, is impatient, active, and ſedulous: Mary gentle and attentive. The conduct of Pontius Pilate, in the ſacrifice of private opinion to popular prejudices and to ſelf-intereſt, is exactly what

we ſee every day exemplified in the intercourſe of the world. Even the treachery of Judas is repreſented to us in a probable and natural manner. He was led to enormous wickedneſs by the gradual proceſs of vice. He was not even at firſt aware of the full extent and of all the evil conſequences of his engagement with the rulers, and was a deluded inſtrument of their malice. This ſeems to be probable from his deſire of returning the price of his guilt, and from his ſubſequent compunction and agony of mind, which led to ſuicide; the too common and dreadful refuge of intolerable anguiſh. It is further a proof of the fidelity and conſiſtence of the ſacred writers, that they deſcribe, on all occaſions, the conduct of the ſeveral ſects of the Jews in a manner exactly conformable to their well-known characters. The haughty and intolerant Phariſee, the diſputatious Scribe, the infidel Sadducee, never act or ſpeak inconſiſtently with their prejudices or their habits.

There is another circumſtance in the hiſtory of the New Teſtament, which adds to its probability. A principal motive with the Jewiſh rulers to diſcourage the doctrines of our Lord, was the apprehenſion of loſing their temporal

authority, and that mean but too common diſpoſition of mankind to court uſurpation. The Roman power was indifferent to the queſtion, whether Jeſus was the expected Meſſiah of the Jews. It was the policy of that people to indulge all whom they conquered with the full enjoyment of their religious ſuperſtitions and attachments. As religion and morals had little connection in their own ſyſtem, all religions were alike to them which did not interfere with the civil power. The prieſts and rulers however made that uſe of the indulgence which was moſt advantageous to their peculiar intereſts. They affected to identify the doctrines of our bleſſed Saviour with the Roman government, exclaiming, *Whoever calleth himſelf a king is not the friend of Cæſar.* Our Lord had never ſpoken of his kingdom in any other than a metaphorical ſenſe; and that kingdom he expreſsly declared was not of this world. But it ſuited their purpoſes to inſiſt on the literal explanation. They therefore pretended to be zealous in the cauſe of their oppreſſor. This conformance to the general practice of the world muſt be allowed to give an air of probability to the ſacred hiſtory. If in the events recorded by

the Evangeliſts any thing contrary to nature had been advanced, it would have weakened the credibility of their narrations.

The parables and the diſcourſes of our Lord, tranſmitted to us by the Evangeliſts, muſt be allowed to be incomparable ſpecimens of concentrated wiſdom, by thoſe who may be diſpoſed to conſider them in no higher point of view than human. But what human power has ever reached to ſuch excellence? Decidedly none. This then is the wiſdom that is from above. It is remarkable of theſe, that, while they contain all the doctrines of belief, they form canons of morality, and ſerve to prove, on this firſt authority, the folly of thoſe who conſider moral topics beneath the dignity of the preacher, or the faith of the Chriſtian. The ſermon on the mount would alone confute the error of ſuch an opinion; but we have in the Goſpels repeated examples to juſtify thoſe, whoſe employment it is to inſtruct in recommending the duties of life, and confirming them by the ſanctions of religion. The parables delivered by our Lord are at once comprehenſive and conciſe, inſtructive and intelligible; and even where the application is not immediately clear, it is ſupplied by our divine Inſtructor himſelf. It ought to excite

our admiration, that, though they may ſometimes not be inſtantly obvious, yet that, when thus explained, we perceive the excellence of the plan, which is ſo finely contrived as to form the moſt convenient vehicle for inſtruction. No mode of teaching is ſo conciſe, ſo comprehenſive, or ſo uſeful, as parables; for theſe make a ready and a durable impreſſion on the memory; and as apparent outlines in viſion give ſhape and diſtinctneſs to bodies, ſo theſe embody and more forcibly impreſs the ſeveral duties of life on the mind. Theſe are ſome of the evidences of the truth of the Chriſtian revelation. When we turn our eyes to the events recorded in the New Teſtament; when we read of the angelic hoſt proclaiming, *Peace on earth, and good will towards men*; when we behold the Redeemer of mankind opening the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, or looſing the tongue of the dumb, and even calling the dead from the grave; when we ſee him nailed on the croſs; when the land is darkened; when we feel the agitation of the earth, and all nature bearing teſtimony to the truth of its God; and laſtly, when we ſee the Holy One, *having looſed the pains of death, becauſe it was not poſſible that he ſhould be holden of it*, and aſcending into

heaven crowned with the glory and the majesty on high; ought not every knee to bow down, and every tongue to confess that Jesus was the Son of God?

LECTURE V.

ACTS ii. 22.

Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns.

HAVING conſidered the conſiſtency of the Moſaic and Chriſtian revelations, I now propoſe to offer a few remarks on the miracles and prophecies which connect the two diſpenſations.

To begin with the ſubject of miracles; a ſpecies of evidence, in which it muſt be allowed that there is no analogy to a general providence; for theſe are deviations from that ordinary courſe, by which he is pleaſed to conduct the works of nature. This evidence is much diſputed, and reluctantly received, not only by thoſe who poſſeſs *an evil heart of unbelief*, but by thoſe who can comprehend that only which immediately operates on the external ſenſes. As St. Paul aſked, when plead-

ing before Agrippa [a], *Why ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you that God ſhould raiſe the dead?* the ſame mode of interrogation may be applied to thoſe who deny this extraordinary interpoſition in his moral government. Why ſhould it be thought incredible that God ſhould work a miracle for any ſpecial purpoſe? In both caſes it muſt obviouſly ſtrike us, that the cauſe is more than equal to the effect. In the mechaniſm of nature, as well as of art, we can always ſuppoſe an effect, to which an adequate cauſe can be aſſigned. This will apply to miracles. There are none affirmed in the Scriptures to have been performed which are beyond the power, or inconſiſtent with the attributes of God. To cauſe a temporary ſuſpenſion, or derangement, or inverſion of the laws of nature, is a leſs effort of Omnipotence than creation, or the appointment of thoſe laws. He who gave life, and contrived ſo exquiſitely all its functions, may, if he pleaſe, arreſt their operation, or reſtore it when deſtroyed. This admits of no diſpute; and therefore the objections of ſceptics are rather raiſed againſt the probability than the poſſibility of a miracle. Now the

[a] Acts xxvi. 8.

moſt obvious anſwer to this may be, that, ſince the poſſibility is granted, we cannot refuſe aſſent to the probability, provided the occaſion or the object of any miraculous interference of the Deity be of ſuch importance as to require a particular ſuſpenſion or diverſion of the ordinary courſe of providence, and if the object alleged be conſiſtent with thoſe great and eſſential attributes, wiſdom, mercy, and juſtice. It has been urged with ſome appearance of plauſibility, that our own experience of the regularity of nature is ſufficient to invalidate any teſtimony that may be brought in favour of a miracle.

This however is to oppoſe particular experience to univerſal; a portion of exiſtence to all the ages of mankind. For what may not have been perceived by one individual, may have been experienced by many; what may not have occurred in one generation, may frequently have been witneſſed in others antecedent. Of collective experience it is impoſſible to ſpeak decidedly, becauſe that may be well known to an individual, or to many individuals, which has never been communicated to others; and there is no univerſal regiſter of experience.

Nor is it a ſufficient confutation of any fact,

to aſſert that it has not been ſubmitted to particular obſervation. We have no means of ocular teſtimony for any hiſtorical circumſtance, and for the truth of ſuch circumſtances we muſt truſt to the records of former ages. Volcanos have exiſted in many parts of the globe, which are now extinct: yet here the phenomena of nature concur to eſtabliſh our belief in their exiſtence. Our faith is here determined by analogy, by conſiderable probability, but altogether without particular experience.

They who oppoſe the credibility of a miracle ſeem to forget that the origin of all created things muſt have been miraculous; that is, contrary to human experience. For the origin of the creation of man, either we muſt truſt to imaginary ſpeculation, or to the declarations of the Scriptures: for nothing is more clear, than that the original parent could not have exiſted from infancy to maturity without ſupernatural aid; for of all animals man is the moſt helpleſs in the early part of exiſtence. The human mind too is progreſſive, and collects and forms all its ideas gradually, and could therefore only arrive at underſtanding by ſome miraculous interpoſition of almighty wiſdom. It is evident therefore, that

the firſt parents of the human ſpecies could not have ſubſiſted in a ſtate of infancy, unleſs by ſome particular interference of Providence; it is therefore certain that they muſt have been created, as the Scriptures repreſent, in a ſtate both of corporeal and mental maturity. The ſame obſervation will apply to many ſpecies of animals. Here then we have an abſolute demonſtration of the exiſtence of miracles; and thus we may ſafely conclude, that God, having at firſt produced all the creation by miracles, might have ſucceſſively employed ſimilar interpoſitions.

Both the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations have been ſubject to diſcuſſion of the ſame kind. Their miracles, and indeed all their evidences, meet with objectors of the ſame temper. They were equally diſputed and diſtruſted. Their authority was equally called in queſtion. But the ſame remark may be made on both, that from their nature they could not have been the effect of any colluſion.

On the ſubject of miracles it is impoſſible to enter into a detail; but their general neceſſity in ages antecedent to the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity muſt be obvious. When events proceed in a natural courſe, they produce little effect on the human mind. Thus the riſing

and ſetting of the ſun, the ſucceſſion of ſeaſons, and all that is regular in nature, goes on without exciting emotions of gratitude or ſerioufneſs. But earthquakes, tempeſts, and other deſtructive and terrific phenomena, awaken extraordinary emotions, and bring us from ſenſuality to God. In the hiſtory of the Jewiſh nation we find that nothing but particular manifeſtations of divine power could reſtrain them from idolatry. The miraculous interpoſition of the Deity has therefore a tendency to make impreſſions which could never be effected by regular proceſs or operation. But even miracles, if too frequent, would cauſe at length very little emotion; for it is ſurpriſing to obſerve how ſoon the mind grows calm, and even becomes callous under extraordinary calamities. Thus we look on death, the moſt awful of human events, with indifference. The great hiſtorian of Athens has informed us, that in the peſtilence which viſited that city during the firſt Peloponneſian war, the ſufferers grew more emboldened in vice, and ſeemed anxious to fill up the ſhort meaſure of their ſuppoſed days with licentiouſneſs. We have the ſame accounts of other cities under ſimilar circumſtances. The inference I would draw is, not that ſuch ex-

traordinary events are void of terror, but that they ceaſe to be ſo by long ſucceſſion. For in theſe inſtances the effect at firſt was very conſiderable; and therefore it is eaſy to underſtand why the Almighty ſhould ſometimes depart from the ordinary courſe of nature, and why theſe deviations ſhould ſeldom occur.

Let us now proceed to the conſideration of prophecy, which may be conſidered a ſpecies of miracle; the one is indeed an inſtantaneous effort of divine power, the other gradual, but equally ſtupendous. The various and ſurpriſing coincidences which occur between the written word and the events which it predicted, are ſuch as muſt at leaſt deſerve the attention of all who are capable of thinking. There is another circumſtance which unites the conſideration of this ſubject immediately with the deſign of theſe Lectures, the regular and conſiſtent plan of the Deity in the prediction and fulfilment of events. Prophecy begins inſtantly with the fall, it proceeds in a connected ſeries of circumſtances, and looks forward to the final conſummation of all things. This ſeries of prophecy, if not exactly regular in conſequence, is ſo in connection. No great events, which relate to the œconomy

of the ſcheme of redemption, are unconnected or independent of prophecy. This divine ſpirit pervades all the courſe of hiſtory, is employed in all the agency of the divine procedure, and in the proceſs of time continually develops new proofs of its proſpective views. It conſoles fallen and afflicted man with the hope, that the ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the head of the ſerpent. It forewarns him of the demolition of the wicked by the univerſal deluge. It accompanies the righteous, and predicts the fate of the renovated world. It foretels the events which ſhould conſole the deſcendants of Abraham. It pictures the fortunes of the ſons of Iſrael. It is the comfort, the counſellor, and the director, of the choſen but irreſolute and inconſtant people of God. It anticipates the moſt glorious and the moſt ſplendid events. Nor is the Gentile world forgotten. Their fate is predicted. The ſun is darkened, according to the peculiar and ſacred language of this predictive ſpirit, the moon is turned into blood, the ſtars fall, the heavens are ſhaken, and the earth is moved; empires and kingdoms fall, flouriſhing cities become ruinous heaps: but all theſe powerful effects are the conſequence of woes long and exactly foretold.

The ſame ſpirit of prophecy accompanies all the moſt illuſtrious events of Chriſtian ſalvation. It prepares the world for its Saviour. It ſpeaks in the voice that cries in the wilderneſs, Prepare ye a highway for your God. It utters itſelf in the words of Him who ſpake as never man ſpake. It is born in the firſt words of conſolation, which God is pleaſed to vouchſafe to conſole the afflicted tranſgreſſor. It lives through the whole ſcheme of redemption, and will only end with the diſſolution of all created things, and be ſwallowed up in the laſt triumph over the reign of ſin and of death.

As the Almighty was pleaſed under the firſt diſpenſation to diſplay his power, and to prove the authority of his meſſengers by miracles, it muſt be reaſonable to expect that the ſecond covenant ſhould be atteſted by the ſame external ſigns. What Moſes and the prophets did to prove their divine commiſſion, it was conſiſtent that Chriſt ſhould effect; for without proofs equally ſignal and equally demonſtrative of authority more than human, the Saviour of mankind would have appeared to the eyes of the world, not only with diminiſhed luſtre, but with inferior power; and he could not have been that prophet which the Legiſlator of Iſrael predicted ſhould be like unto himſelf.

Thoſe who believed in the power of Moſes would not have truſted in Chriſt, had he appeared inferior to him in the marks or ſigns of his commiſſion. The humility of his ſtation was always an objection urged by the vainglorious, by thoſe who expected and were enamoured with the power of an earthly prince; and all the wiſdom of Jeſus would have been of no avail without his power of working miracles. Indeed our bleſſed Lord made this appeal himſelf to the world: *Though ye believe not me, believe the works.* The advocates of revealed religion have ever conſidered the completion of prophecy as an inconteſtable proof of the divine origin of their faith. The enemies of Chriſtianity, conſcious of the force of this argument, have endeavoured to invalidate the authority of an evidence which they cannot deny, and to leſſen the credibility of thoſe facts which they cannot diſprove.

But as there is a ſtrong reſemblance between the circumſtances of hiſtory and the predictions which foretold them, which they were unable to diſavow, Porphyry, who flouriſhed in the third century, boldly affirmed that the predictions of the ſacred hiſtory were written after the events; and he gave this reaſon, that the Jewiſh prophecies were more like

a narrative of paſt tranſactions, than a proſpectus of future events. To anſwer this objection, nothing more is neceſſary than to prove from hiſtorical evidence that this aſſertion was ill-grounded.

It is incontrovertible, that the Macedonian empire was poſterior to the predictions of its riſe and fall in the prophecies of Daniel; and that the Roman conqueſts were obtained long after the death of the ſame illuſtrious prophet. The truth of prophecy might be doubtful, if the events foretold were not numerous. A fortuitous concurrence of a few circumſtances might poſſibly happen.

The agreement of many cannot naturally be expected, but the exact completion of the far greater part muſt be conſidered as miraculous. Let us attend to this unanſwerable and convincing argument; for how is it poſſible, unleſs by ſome unhappy infatuation, to diſbelieve all the remarkable predictions of the holy Scriptures? In thoſe ſacred books we may diſcern the hiſtory of all the important ſcenes which have been tranſacted on the great theatre of the world diſplayed in the moſt luminous characters. You may there behold all the conſequent events of hiſtory wonderfully delineated, though not underſtood until their com-

pletion; like the vegetable embryon, which contains the principles of all future ramification, and which, as favourable ſeaſons advance, gradually diſcloſes and expands.

Thus the arcana of ſacred and profane hiſtory were wonderfully proclaimed by the word of God, in the writings of his inſpired prophets, though beyond the power of human penetration. But as the events are tranſacted, the reſemblance is gradually diſcovered. All becomes evident and indiſputable. Our ſcruples are ſwallowed up in certainty, and infidelity converted into admiration.

It is indeed probable, that thoſe who were employed in proclaiming the predictions were often ignorant, or at leaſt had only obſcure conceptions of future circumſtances. That the great outlines of ſacred and profane hiſtory are all delineated in the oracles of divine wiſdom, is a circumſtance too obvious to be denied by the candid; but the injudicious vanity of ſpeculators has contributed in a great meaſure to weaken the dignity of prophecy. They have not waited for the gradual diſcloſure of events; but have even been adapting circumſtances to a prophecy from their own imagination, attempting to draw reſemblances where in fact there is little, or even no trace of a likeneſs,

But by premature conjectures they perplex themſelves and diſcourage others.

Now it is evident that a prophecy is only known by the event; and where the event is fully completed, the likeneſs is ſo ſtriking that it cannot be miſtaken. But the ambition of diſcovery leads man to fancy reſemblances to prove the ſimilitude, while the prophecy is yet in a ſtate of advance. They judge by equivocal and fallible ſymptoms. In the prophetic declarations we are to admire the coincidence of the events with the prophecy. Thus, that Babylon ſhould become a waſte; that the pride of Tyre ſhould fall; is not in itſelf miraculous: for we allow with the unbeliever, that ſimilar circumſtances have happened, and that many cities, and even kingdoms, in the revolution of events, have ſunk from a ſtate of pride and grandeur into inſignificance. But the circumſtance to be admired is, that the event ſhould exactly correſpond with its prediction. Babylon or Tyre deſtroyed, or Nineveh or Jeruſalem waſted, are not ſo much the ſubject of wonder: but that after the prediction Babylon and Jeruſalem ſhould have ſuffered after the manner foretold, is extraordinary, and by this coincidence the miracle is confirmed.

The ſole queſtion therefore is, whether the predictions were ſubſequent to the events, or whether they preceded them. The perverſe and determined infidel will always plead, that our evidence is not ſatisfactory, or our aſſertions not ſufficiently well atteſted. But when it may be proved, that the circumſtances which the ſacred hiſtorians have propheſied are yet tranſacting in the world, are fulfilling at the preſent hour; candour muſt neceſſarily acquieſce in the truth of a revelation, ſupported by ſuch undeniable facts. We muſt conſider the preſent ſtate of the Jewiſh nation as one of the moſt convincing arguments in favour of Chriſtianity.

At this conſiderable diſtance of time we can no longer doubt the circumſtances of the prediction. We muſt look with an awful reverence on thoſe ſacred characters who have foretold the events of which we are now the ſpectators. We have only to look around and be convinced. The temporal intereſts of thoſe who predicted them, if ſuch they had, have long been annihilated, and all their hopes of fame, of honour, and of profit, have been buried in the grave. We muſt now be convinced that they were alone influenced by the divine Spirit, and by that genuine and honeſt

love of truth which it inſpires. We may acquire conviction of the certainty of the divine promiſes in the actual tranſaction of his providence, at once undeniable, manifeſt, and intelligible. Here indeed the immediate influence has not been perceptible, though its effects are certain. The divine agency has operated on the minds of men; their artful ſchemes of ambition, and their reſtleſs diſpoſitions, have all been ſubſervient to the ſecret purpoſes of his comprehenſive providence.

It is an obſervation of our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, that a wicked and perverſe generation aſketh for a ſign. A ſign we have. We ſee a nation wonderfully preſerved for numerous centuries, and widely diſperſed all over the ſurface of the globe, yet miraculouſly kept diſtinct from all others with which they have been intermixed; oppreſſed, yet ſubſiſting agreeably to the divine predictions. As in nature there are particles of bodies which remain inviolable, however combined; ſo theſe extraordinary people, diſperſed throughout every climate, and amidſt every nation, have been attracted to each other by a wonderful power of ſubſiſtence, though ever ſubject to the arbitrary impoſitions, the tyranny and oppreſſion, the perſecution and hatred, of all man-

kind. They have multiplied under attempts to effect their extirpation; and whilſt the government and manners, and cuſtoms and religions of other nations, have been continually fluctuating, they have only remained attached to the ſame obſtinate principles, to the ſame inflexible habits. It was the requeſt of the rich man in the parable, while from the ſeat of torment he viewed Lazarus in the boſom of Abraham, that he would ſend one from the dead to his brethren, to warn them to flee from the wrath to come, leſt they alſo ſhould go into that place of torment. The requeſt was founded on a ſuppoſition, that a meſſage from the dead would enforce a degree of conviction which no other arguments could produce. But his demand received this remarkable anſwer; *They have Moſes and the prophets.* And when the petition was again repeated, that if one roſe from the dead they would repent; it was added, *If they believe not Moſes and the prophets, neither will they be perſuaded though one roſe from the dead.* But with what additional force may not this argument be preſſed on us! We have not only Moſes and the prophets, but we have the actual completion of their predictions to confirm our faith. We are in poſſeſſion of evidence

which thoſe who lived in the generation of prophets could not obtain, and therefore the obſervation of our great Redeemer may be applied to us in a moſt obvious ſenſe; that many great and wiſe men have deſired to ſee the things which we ſee, and have not been able to view them. In a word, let ſcepticiſm attempt to invalidate all the evidences of Chriſtianity, yet this it cannot deſtroy: conviction is here eſtabliſhed on a firm baſis. The kings of the earth and the rulers have taken counſel together to deſtroy the ſtanding and perpetual proof of the divine truth; but they have not prevailed. The Jews are an everlaſting and ſignal inſtance of the power of God; he has ſcattered them in his wrath, according to the declarations of his anger. Whilſt we thus behold the operations of his power, and the immutability of his truth, we muſt bow down in awful devotion. But there is alſo a ſtrong evidence in the hiſtory of the Jews; they have ſubſiſted not only contrary to all human experience, but by ſuch means as have proved the ſubverſion of other civilized nations of the world. That any people ſhould exiſt as a diſtinct ſociety under thoſe circumſtances which would naturally tend to confound them, is certainly to be conſidered as

miraculous: and that the Jews have continued to the preſent moment unmixed, and contrary to all example, we muſt acknowledge. Let us for a moment take a conciſe view of the moſt memorable tranſactions which have dignified the pages of hiſtory. The firſt empire, of which any certain traces have been diſcovered by profane hiſtorians, amidſt the dark and unenlightened ages of the barbarous world, is that of Aſſyria. During this period the Jewiſh nation was forced into a wretched captivity; but they were reſtored about ſeventy years after by Cyrus, who united the Perſian and Median kingdoms, and ſubverted the empire of Babylon. But his degenerate ſucceſſors were too effeminate to maintain the empire of Perſia which he had eſtabliſhed, and the laſt fell a ſacrifice to the talents of Alexander the Great, and to the ſuperior military conduct of the Macedonians. The empire however which Alexander had raiſed did not long ſubſiſt. Immediately on his death it became convulſed and divided by the ſeparate intereſts and jealous claims of his generals, and after various revolutions was finally deſtroyed by the Romans. The Roman empire, which by its maſſy weight had cruſhed the reſt of the world, and like a torrent had borne down all

oppoſition, at length began to languiſh; and when its force was ſpent, it was overcome by more powerful and numerous ſtreams. Now in all theſe remarkable events, which are uſually called the four great monarchies, what traces are there of the people who compoſed them? Where are the Aſſyrians, the Macedonians, the Greeks or Romans? Yet the Jews ſtill ſubſiſt. The former are undiſtinguiſhed in the common maſs of mankind; yet the Jews are a diſtinct people, though mingled with the nations of the earth, like a drop of oil, which, though diffuſed on an ocean of water, by its repulſive power remains unmixed. In the uſual revolutions of kingdoms all traces of the aboriginal inhabitants have been loſt. But the Jewiſh people are yet diſtinguiſhable, are ſtill deſcendants of the ſame origin, and are preſerved amidſt every circumſtance, which in the natural courſe of things would tend to confound them with all other nations. Let us acknowledge the miraculous interpoſition of a divine Providence in thoſe ſtriking inſtances, and may the contemplation of it confirm and eſtabliſh our faith: may it teach us to look forward with the moſt ardent expectation and earneſt hope to that glorious manifeſtation of his power, when not only the Jews, but all

the nations of the world, ſhall bow the knee to the name of Jeſus, and all be united into one fold, and under one Shepherd!

LECTURE VI.

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wiſdom that is from above is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy.

WHILE the preſent generation, in common with all that have preceded it, is too prolific of infidelity; while there are many who will not labour to ſtudy the principles of Chriſtianity; while others treat it with open contempt, or cold indifference; a deſcription of character abounds diametrically oppoſite. As ſome are diſpoſed to believe nothing, theſe latter profeſs implicitly to receive every thing, and are believers by intuition. They aſk for no evidence; they reject reaſon as uſeleſs, and even profane; and truſt only to certain inward and equivocal feelings. They pretend not to be as other men are, but to have received aſſurance of juſtification. They act only from an internal, though imaginary impulſe, while the

Holy Spirit is ſuppoſed partially to deſcend with irreſiſtible influence on their minds. Thus wrapt in viſionary poſſeſſion, they conceive themſelves raiſed above ordinary men, and to require none of thoſe aids which are indiſpenſable to common mortals. Such irreſiſtible influence would indeed render not only evidence and argument ſuperfluous, but even religious practice. For of what avail are ordinances, if men can be ſaved by inſtantaneous converſion? But ſhould this be a miſtake, is not their deluſion dangerous to themſelves? To the reſt of mankind ſuch ſentiments are pernicious; and it becomes the friends of rational religion to combat and expoſe ſuch unfounded preſumption. A wild ſpirit of enthuſiaſm is no where encouraged by the doctrines and the example of the meek and ſubmiſſive Redeemer; neither by the conduct or the writings of his Evangeliſts or Apoſtles; nor ſanctioned by the articles of our Church.

Having therefore endeavoured to ſhew the regular conſiſtency of all the ſchemes of providence, and the demonſtrative probability of the truth of the Chriſtian religion; we muſt now ſhew the unhappy tendency of pretenſions, which would deſtroy all conſiſtence, and render religion contrary to what God has evi-

dently deſigned it to be; making it, inſtead of a ſyſtem of practical piety and goodneſs, a viſionary illuſion. It is highly probable that theſe opinions originate from the ſame ſtrong and reſtleſs paſſions of the mind which influence other men to deviate into the extreme of infidelity. Theſe extremes of error ſpring from the ſame evil root. The ſame principle of ambition is obſervable in both. If the infidel is gratified by aſſuming the ſolemnity of doubt, of ſuſpicion and ſcorn, and in thus defying the armies of the living God; the pride of the enthuſiaſt is equally flattered by the idea of his being the choſen favourite of Heaven.

The diſputer preſumes to exalt reaſon on the ruins of religion, and to give laws to Omniſcience. The enthuſiaſt, while he alſo dictates to man, aſpires to familiar intercourſe with the Sovereign of the univerſe. The one, in the vain conſciouſneſs of his own ſtrength, contemns a Saviour: the other, in the ſame ſpirit of preſumption, claims ſalvation as his right; ſince he imagines it to have been his inheritance before the world began. In this parallel the claims of the infidel ſink into comparative inſignificance. He aſſerts preeminence only over the preſent world. But the

imaginary favourite of Heaven claims a preſent and an anticipated diſtinction, and conſiders himſelf to have been a choſen veſſel before worlds were created, or ſalvation proclaimed. Fanaticiſm is the offſpring of mental gloom; but pride is the ſpark which kindles it into flame, and produces the peſtilential diſperſion of the noxious vapour. It is obſervable that the fanatic always deſcribes his converſion as originating from dejection of ſpirit. He is oppreſſed by unaccountable horror, and overwhelmed with inexpreſſible fear. He ſinks under the weight of real or imaginary apprehenſion, till on a ſudden he perceives or fancies illumination and elevation of mind. His feelings are now of a contrary nature. Doubt is converted into arrogance, deſpair into certainty of ſalvation: and are not theſe evident extremes? The firſt is natural. To feel diſtreſs of mind from a ſenſe of miſconduct is the effect of an awakened conſcience: but inſtantaneous exultation is not natural, but an extravagant tranſition from a ſtate of the loweſt dejection; from the dread of reprobation to the certainty of forgiveneſs; from the bondage of Satan to the inheritance of heaven. In all this it is remarkable, that this ſenſe of guilt,

while it is conſidered a call to election, is rather an encouragement to preſumption than productive of humility, which is the genuine fruit of the Spirit. May we not then truly attribute this inſtantaneous confidence to that potent principle of vanity which keeps the temper of man perpetually buoyant, and to that ambition which is ever aiming at ſuperiority, whether it be ſpiritual or carnal? But againſt this ſpiritual pride the Scriptures themſelves conſtantly inveigh, and by ſevere condemnation reveal to us plainly, that the Omniſcient knows the force by which it prevails, and the empire which it obtains over the mind. But if ſpiritual pride be odious to God, it is alſo diſguſting to men. However elated the fanatic may feel, however ſatisfied with himſelf in general, there is no character leſs amiable. Where is the gentle ſpirit, the engaging charity, which characterizes the true Chriſtian, and which was ſo eminently apparent in the whole deportment of our bleſſed Maſter? The whole character of ſpiritual pride is diametrically oppoſite; for a man of this temper looks on all the world as beneath him. The elevation of mind which he poſſeſſes is decidedly not that ſpirit or wiſdom which we are taught to expect from above, and which

the text ſo beautifully deſcribes as *firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy.* With juſt ſeverity therefore the Apoſtle adds, *the contrary ſpirit is earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh.* Now to diſcern the true temper of religion, the real fruits of the Holy Spirit, we have here an excellent criterion. It muſt firſt be pure. Of purity, God only can be the judge; we will therefore leave the fanatic to his own conſcience, and to the ſcrutiny of Him, who is the ſearcher of hearts. Next it muſt be peaceable and gentle. Thoſe who deſpiſe others have little of the diſpoſition of peace or gentleneſs. It muſt be eaſy to be intreated. Is the converted fanatic generally eaſy to be intreated? It muſt be full of mercy. Is intolerance merciful? It muſt be full of good fruits. Here is the deciſive teſt. What are the fruits? If good, we may believe him; if bad, then it is not uncharitable to draw the laſt concluſion, that it is not without hypocriſy. Here is the teſt, by which, if men can contrive to deceive themſelves, aſſuredly they will not deceive others; and if in ſuch points men be hypocrites, how deep and how flagitious is that hypocriſy! and fatal is their error, for they cannot deceive God.

But as there is a diſtinction to be made between a ſpirit of enthuſiaſm and fanaticiſm in religion, as well as in general conduct, it may be proper here to draw a parallel, that they may be the more eaſily diſtinguiſhed.

Enthuſiaſm is often a laudable ardour, which elevates the ſoul, and ſerves to raiſe it to excellence. It is dignified, ſentimental, generous, and diſintereſted. Fanaticiſm, on the contrary, is baſe, gloomy, deceitful, ſelfiſh, and inexorable. Enthuſiaſm is the friend of virtue, the ſtimulus of youth, and the ſtrength of manhood. Without enthuſiaſm action will be lanquid, and feeling cold. Fanaticiſm is the incentive to error, and narrows every virtue; nay, even converts goodneſs into vice, religion into bigotry, and mercy into perſecution. Enthuſiaſm dares much for the good of mankind, and ſacrifices ſelf-intereſt for the ſalvation of others. Fanaticiſm ſharpens the dagger of the aſſaſſin, and exults in the thouſands and tens of thouſands it has ſlain. Enthuſiaſm may be tempered with gentleneſs, and ſoftened by mercy. But fanaticiſm is incapable of kindneſs or compunction. Fanaticiſm, with unconverted Paul, believes that it does good to perſecute. Fanaticiſm, the demon of heathen temples, dictated the ſevere perſecution of the

firſt Chriſtians: it preſided over all the cruelties of bigoted Rome; lit the fire of the bleſſed martyrs; overturned kingdoms and altars, and arts and ſciences; and has deluged the earth with blood and rapine and devaſtation. Enthuſiaſm is indeed an extreme of paſſion; but without ſome ſhare of this there can be little excellence, either moral or intellectual: but fanaticiſm is the deſtruction of all that is good or great. We charge not modern fanaticiſm with all thoſe direful effects, but ſuch is its ſpirit; and melancholy experience has ſhewn us, in this kingdom, to what enormities it has led, and to what it may again tend, ſhould it too generally prevail. Our own age has alſo ſhewn its dreadful conſequences in neighbouring nations, where it has raged under various characters. Indeed all hiſtory abounds with examples, which ſhould teach us to ſhudder at exceſſes ſo dangerous to the happineſs of ſociety.

To ſpiritual pride then we may commonly refer thoſe fanatical notions which are even now cheriſhed, and which have done ſerious injury to the cauſe of religion. While the baſer paſſions retain any influence over moral character, and theſe will perhaps ever be prevalent, there is little hope that ſuch errors will

be eradicated. There is a ſpirit of ambition in the human mind, that is indeed, as the Apoſtle ſtyles it, *earthly, ſenſual, and deviliſh.* This ſpirit is the deſtruction of all the temporal peace of mankind: but how lamentable is the reflection, that it is no leſs ſo of religious peace and unity; that it not only diſturbs the tranquillity of private life, but of the ſanctuary of God!

Nor has this temper alone characterized religious enthuſiaſts of old, the Phariſee or the Samaritan; but has tended to injure the true intereſts of Chriſtianity. To this alſo we muſt attribute the avidity with which the doctrines of election and reprobation are embraced and cheriſhed, in a ſenſe very different from that of our Church. A ſpirit of extravagant and bigoted zeal is undoubtedly injurious to true religion; and, were it ſtill to increaſe, would threaten the Church with ſerious danger. It appears then, that no taſk can be more appropriate, and more conformable to the intention of the pious Founder of theſe Lectures, and to the beſt intereſts of our eſtabliſhment, than to controvert opponents who openly breathe defiance, and ſome, who, while they ſit at the table of the Lord with us, eat of the ſame bread, and drink of the ſame cup of communion, yet

uncharitably cenſure us. It muſt not, it cannot be concealed, that there are men, who, under the pretext of more than ordinary zeal for the doctrines of the eſtabliſhed Church, are ever ready to ſtrain her moderate and liberal opinions to the utmoſt ſtretch; to interpret them agreeably to their own extravagant ſentiments. It muſt not be concealed, that there are even ſome who take ſhelter under theſe very articles from reprehenſion.

In the Goſpels, the characters of ſuch pretenders to more than ordinary zeal in religion has been pourtrayed by our bleſſed Lord himſelf; and no error ſeems to have excited more ſtrong or more frequent reproof from Him, whom the Baptiſt truly deſignated by the appropriate figure of the Lamb of God: yet here even celeſtial patience could not refrain from expreſſing a juſt indignation. On ſuch occaſions he ſpoke with peculiar energy. Let us examine the picture, for the reſemblance cannot be miſtaken; this reſemblance however affects not any particular ſect or deſcription of men. It applies to all, of whatever denomination of Chriſtians, who profeſs more than they perform; who are zealous merely in opinion; and who, while they are ſtrict in the obſervance, or oſtentatious in the profeſſion of

the externals of religion, make this display a pretext to deceive; to substitute a part of religion for the whole. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, as well as in others, we read of the severe censures of our Lord on the Scribes and Pharisees: *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows houses, and for a pretence make long prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation*[a]. To make long prayers seems to have been at all times the characteristic practice of zealots as well as deceivers. This practice however our Lord discountenances, and condemns the heathen on that account. They think to be heard, says he, for their much speaking; a pretext not only for public deception, but a commutation. Long prayers are the substitute for practical charity; much speaking for negligence of duty. It is a weak but very prevailing notion, that God will be pleased with incessant supplication. He indeed declares himself well pleased with the sincere offerings of gratitude and contrition; but it is a more substantial service which he requires than that of the lips, the real tribute of the heart; one sigh of true repentance, one act of mercy,

[a] Matt. xxiii. 14.

that mercy which he loves better than ſacrifice, is in his ſight of far greater worth than years of unmeaning homage. With him the prayer of the wicked is turned into ſin. Purity, humility, and ſingleneſs of heart, are the offerings in which he delights. Virtue is the beſt incenſe; and without this, faith is vain, and the pomp of devotion nothing more than oſtentatious ſin. It is however evident, that in the time of our bleſſed Saviour religion was made a pretext for the vileſt purpoſes. The Phariſees prayed to acquire popularity, that they might have opportunities of fraud by abuſing the confidence repoſed in them; that they might devour widows houſes. Surpriſing is the effect of this ſhallow artifice; and it has ever been, and ſtill continues to be, too ſucceſsful. It might be imagined, that, as a very great part of mankind is engaged in the arts of deception, ſuſpicion would be too vigilant, and diſcernment too acute, to be deluded by ſo thin a veil. But while ſuperſtition prevails over the true ſentiments of religion, it renders thoſe the dupes of pretended ſanctity, who could not be eaſily deceived in the common tranſactions of life. A guilty conſcience makes intellectual cowards; and artful men employ ſpiritual fear to govern and to take advantage

of thoſe whom they could never control by fair argument, or ſolid conviction. The credulity of ignorance is aſtoniſhing; and there ſeems to be an infatuation in religious bigotry. With this the children of this world are well acquainted, and find it a very infallible inſtrument of deceit. The ſtrongeſt paſſions of the human mind are hope and fear; theſe hypocriſy connects with the intereſts of a future world. Governed by theſe, the feelings are eaſily and warmly excited, and made ſubſervient to artifice and cunning. Detection in ſuch caſes ſeldom produces conviction; for thoſe who voluntarily cloſe their own eyes are equally unwilling to open them. In many inſtances perhaps the devotee is aſhamed of confeſſing the folly of his credulity, and finds his own reputation cloſely and unhappily connected with the deceiver; for he who allows himſelf to have been deluded, admits the weakneſs of his own character. It is to be remarked too, that there is in ſuch caſes frequent and mutual compact of deception. The fanatic inſiſts on no moral ſacrifice in the diſciple. He teaches him a ſubſtitute. Hence the widow may be defrauded with impunity. He who has learnt the arts of falſehood is not diſappointed if he finds his inſtructor an hypo-

crite to other men. We are only angry at deception practiſed on ourſelves; and we are generally careleſs of the intereſt of others. The only mortification which ſuch men can feel is for the detection of the occupation. The preſent world and its pleaſures have the firmeſt hold on the heart and the paſſions. How to enjoy the one without the loſs of the other is a queſtion of the greateſt intereſt. There is nothing which men will not believe, if they can be flattered with this hope. That the Chriſtian religion has been eſtabliſhed in the world in contradiction to ſordid views, is a ſtrong proof of its divine origin; for no doctrine in the Goſpel can be more clear than that we muſt ſurrender the world for the croſs of Chriſt, and that the intereſts of the preſent and the future life are incompatible; that the friendſhip of this world is enmity with God. But no doctrines are better calculated to gain proſelytes than a ſcheme which propoſes to evade the vengeance of the Almighty, to deceive the world, and to ſtill the voice of conſcience. Hence great was the ſucceſs of the Church of Rome in the ſale of indulgences, by the aſſumption of a diſpenſing power converting ſin into virtue. And what does the Proteſtant fanatic leſs, who conſtantly decries virtue

and morality, and repreſents it even as odious in the ſight of God?

The confeſſion of ſin, however, as a preliminary to pardon, implies a ſenſe of its turpitude. But blind enthuſiaſm renounces the offering of good works, as a kind of affront to the Saviour. Tranſgreſſions are called by the ſpecious name of trials; for names have great power in deception, and are the counterfeit ſigns of ideas. Hence remorſe and repentance make no part of that creed which denies the efficacy of virtue.

Our bleſſed Lord goes on to ſay, *Woe unto you, Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites! for ye compaſs ſea and land to make one proſelyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourſelves* [b]. If it be true that any preacher decries the great obligations, the indiſpenſable conditions of morality, he promulgates doctrines which muſt make his proſelytes, according to the language of our Saviour, children of hell. For he who loſes a moral ſenſe is indeed truly undone.

That he that doeth wickedneſs is unrighteous, is the plain and decided doctrine of re-

[b] Matt. xxiii. 15.

ligion. It is an obvious truth; and none who have ever been inſtructed in any idea of right or wrong, entertains any doubt on the ſubject. Whoever therefore by any artifice or evaſion is confirmed or indulged in vicious habits; whoever is taught that he need not cut off the right hand, or pluck out the right eye, but may enjoy his darling vice, and be beloved by God, while he is the ſervant of ſin, is indeed in danger of perdition.

But how melancholy is his condition, who has perhaps been content to walk humbly before his God on truly ſcriptural and rational opinions, and yet unhappily becomes deluded by ſuch erroneous doctrines! Many inoffenſive characters of this deſcription are often cruelly deceived and led aſtray from the ſure and certain path: for with the fanatic all moral confidence is not only falſe, but even a proof of reprobation.

To place any truſt in the practice of our duty to God and our neighbour is eſteemed not only cenſurable, but even a ſign of condemnation; and the poor wretch, who is thus taught to diſtruſt his good actions, loſes his virtue in his new religion. He is miſguided by that light which the Saviour of the world has taught us to call darkneſs. Such incidents

are not rare. It is the firſt article in the creed of the extravagant enthuſiaſt. Nor is this all. The victim is not only perſuaded that good and religious conduct will not render him worthy of acceptance with God; but that, unleſs he feel within himſelf ſome extraordinary aſſurance of divine favour, ſome actual but indeſcribable experience, he is in a ſtate of reprobation, and utterly loſt, and muſt periſh everlaſtingly. Alarmed by this repreſentation, and probably modeſt and diſtruſtful of himſelf by nature and habit, he miſtakes the dream of fancy for reality, and ſinks into dejection. His mind is totally loſt. All that placid and ſoothing temper, which before had kept him in a ſtate of enviable placidity, the conſequences of religious practice and of good inſtruction, forſakes him. That indeſcribable and delightful conſolation which ariſes from virtuous, innocent, religious, and laudable purſuits, is for ever deſtroyed. The world can no more afford him delight. Even devout contemplation gives him no ſatisfaction. He becomes melancholy and dejected from being taught to look on all around him with apprehenſion; he loſes all that ſerenity and cheerfulneſs which are inſeparable from rational religion, and at length ſinks into morbid inſanity, or incurable de-

ſpair. This is the fate of thouſands, who are deceived by ſuch dangerous doctrines; doctrines ſhocking to reaſon, and contrary to every intimation given to us in the Goſpel, or the writings of the Apoſtles. Such are the effects of the terrific and uncomfortable repreſentations of fanaticiſm operating on modeſt and ingenuous, but miſtaken minds. And deeply have we to lament, that while the orthodox paſtor of the Church is zealous in inſtilling its pure and rational doctrines, he is robbed by the extravagant zealot of inoffenſive hearers, who become the unſuſpicious victims of miſrepreſentation.

But on perſons of a different deſcription their effects are often diametrically oppoſite. They create the moſt odious paſſions, and produce the moſt diſguſting effects. On the victim of religious frenzy we can look with compaſſion; but on the being, inflated with the ſelf-ſufficiency of ſpiritual pride, who impiouſly imagines himſelf the more immediate favourite of Heaven, and who affects to deſpiſe men better than himſelf; who does not look with indignation! No pride is ſo intolerable as ſpiritual; and vanity, which on other occaſions is for the moſt part fitter for deriſion than for ſerious animadverſion, is in ſuch inſtances no leſs

diſguſting. Is it poſſible for a moment to conceive, that ſuch a character can be acceptable in the ſight of God? When we obſerve an harmleſs and unaſſuming Chriſtian, thus betrayed or drawn aſide from the true religion, which at once teaches the doctrines of ſalvation and encourages moral conduct, in which he has been educated; robbed of all conſolation and peace, and driven into deſpair; are not the conſequences fatal to ſociety? It is a favourite doctrine of infidelity, that God will not be extreme to mark what is done amiſs; that he will allow for the frailty of men, and place crimes to the account of natural infirmity; that we may indulge ourſelves in a favourite vice, provided we can ſatisfy the ſcruples of conſcience by ſome plauſible pretext. The fanatic, on the other hand, is taught, that where grace abounds there cannot be ſin, and that his lapſes therefore are venial; that to the elect no ſin will be imputed. And what is the conſequence? The fanatic reaſons thus; I am bleſſed with a new and better light; I feel grace abound in me. I may fall; but ſin will not be imputed to me. Good works are oſtentatious; and therefore, whatever I do, my ſalvation is ſure; for I am bought with a

price, and the gates of hell cannot prevail againſt me. Will the enthuſiaſt then deny himſelf enjoyment, to which he can flatter himſelf that he is licenſed? Who will love virtue, if he believes that it is not eſſential to propitiate the favour of Heaven? Who will forſake ſin, if he can perſuade himſelf that it is not diſpleaſing to his Maker? I would not be ſo illiberal as to charge any deſcription of enthuſiaſts with a ſyſtematic plan to encourage vice. I believe that they neither profeſs ſuch a deſign, nor openly encourage it. It is impoſſible to ſuppoſe that the more flagrant vices are not condemned by preachers of this deſcription.

But is it not highly dangerous to morals to inveigh againſt practical virtue; perpetually to ſtigmatize good works with opprobrious epithets? In oppoſition to theſe pernicious ſentiments, unhappily too prevalent, let us contraſt the truly apoſtolical doctrines of our Church, which teaches us, in an expreſs article, not to truſt in our works, as if they could of themſelves put away ſin and endure the ſeverity of God's judgment; yet that they are pleaſing and acceptable to God in Chriſt, and neceſſarily ſpring out of a true and lively faith, inſo-

much that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree diſcerned by the fruit. From hence the queſtion may be fairly decided, who are the true preachers of the word of God.

LECTURE VII.

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wiſdom that is from above is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy.

THE pretenſions of modern enthuſiaſts are founded on the doctrines of predeſtination and election, and they appeal to the ſeventeenth article of our Church as decidedly in their favour, and condemn thoſe of the clergy whoſe opinions on this article partake leſs of the rigid ſpirit of Calvin. It will be our buſineſs at preſent to inquire, whether theſe opinions are not exaggerated by enthuſiaſts beyond the ſpirit, with which the article was framed, will warrant. The article aſſerts, that "predeſti-" nation to life is the everlaſting purpoſe of " God, whereby, before the foundations of the " world were laid, he hath conſtantly decreed " by his counſel, ſecret to us, to deliver from " curſe and damnation thoſe whom he hath

" choſen through Chriſt out of mankind, and " to bring them by Chriſt to everlaſting ſalva- " tion, as veſſels made to honour." Now firſt, in this repreſentation it is obſervable, that no alluſion is made to any determinate number of perſons. It ſpeaks generally of thoſe who are choſen; of whom the number may be unlimited. Choice does indeed imply preference, and preference ſelection. But then this choice is not repreſented as arbitrary or capricious; " they are choſen through Chriſt." Now as the promiſes are made through Chriſt to all who believe, here is the moſt perfect freedom of will.

All who chooſe to accept ſalvation through Chriſt are made capable of doing ſo. They have religious liberty; and as Chriſt has promiſed to accept all who come to him, the covenant between God the Father and Jeſus is, that all will be accepted who apply to the Mediator; conſequently all may be ſaved, if all be willing to apply. It is further obſervable, that there is no mention of reprobation. Here is neither particular unconditional choice, nor is there abſolute rejection; for as no preciſe number is ſaid to be choſen, nor indeed any preciſe number implied, it is evident that that which is indefinite may be infinite. Even the

very notion of choice does not imply more than preference upon certain conditions. It includes not the idea of rejection, unleſs where the number to be choſen is defined by ſome abſolute decree, by which the Deity has bound himſelf; nor would ſuch an idea be conſonant to our reaſonable conjecture of his attributes. It ſeems therefore evident, that if all mankind are willing to accept the conditions; that is, if all are willing to apply to Chriſt, all may be ſaved; all may, all will be choſen. In this repreſentation there is nothing inconſiſtent or unreaſonable. The ſcheme of Chriſtianity proceeds on this clear principle, that ſalvation can only be through Chriſt to all who are called; that is, all who hear, receive, and obey the Goſpel; and that if any who hear will not receive, they muſt of courſe be rejected. It proceeds further on the ſuppoſition that all mankind are ſubject to the conſequences of the tranſgreſſion of the firſt man, and in bondage to original ſin. It is not now my purpoſe to diſcuſs the conſideration with the philoſopher, or to diſpute it with the enthuſiaſt. Suppoſe this to be the fact, and the determination or decree of God to liberate mankind from bondage is merciful and conſiſtent with divine goodneſs, and the conditions may certainly be left to infinite power.

The article does not at all ſpeak of any who ſhall be abſolutely rejected, or who ſhall be placed out of the reach of divine mercy, but proceeds conformably to deſcribe the natural conſequences of this free determination. All who believe and obey the word are "as veſſels "made to honour;" in alluſion to the apoſtolic ſimile of the potter. And it is to be remarked, that this ſimile is uſed in the Epiſtle to the Romans, as an argument of mercy, in anſwer to the bigoted opinions of the Judaizing Chriſtians, who objected to the reception of the Gentile converts; it relates therefore not to a firſt, but a ſecond creation through Chriſt. "Wherefore they which be endued with ſo "excellent a benefit of God, be called accord-"ing to God's purpoſe by his Spirit working "in due ſeaſon." We know that all are called, though not all accepted; according to his purpoſe or deſign, his plan of redemption: but thoſe who accept the terms "through grace "obey the calling; they be juſtified freely." Obſerve, they are juſtified unconditionally through obedience to the call. They are not impelled by any neceſſity. "They be made "ſons of God by adoption;" that is, by the choice, which is the effect of obeying the call. "They be made like the image of his only

" begotten ſon Jeſus Chriſt: they walk reli-
" giouſly in good works; and at length, by
" God's mercy, they attain to everlaſting feli-
" city." Obſerve further, that walking religiouſly in good works is the teſt, the mark and proof of the acceptance. All this is extremely natural and conſiſtent with every repreſentation of Scripture. This is clearly an elucidation of the mercy of God; but gives not any idea of reprobation, unleſs of thoſe who hear and will not believe. The article goes on; " As the godly conſideration of pre-
" deſtination, and our election in Chriſt, is full
" of ſweet, pleaſant, and unſpeakable comfort
" to godly perſons, and ſuch as feel in them-
" ſelves the working of the Spirit of Chriſt,
" mortifying the works of the fleſh, and their
" earthly members, and drawing up their minds
" to high and heavenly things; as well be-
" cauſe it doth greatly eſtabliſh and confirm
" their faith of eternal ſalvation, to be enjoyed
" through Chriſt, as becauſe it doth fervently
" kindle their love towards God; ſo, for cu-
" rious and carnal perſons lacking the ſpirit of
" Chriſt, to have continually before their eyes
" the ſentence of God's predeſtination, is a moſt
" dangerous downfall, whereby the Devil doth
" thruſt them either into deſperation, or into

" wretchleſſneſs of moſt unclean living, no leſs " perilous than deſperation." Let us remark on all this. What is full of unſpeakable comfort? " The godly conſideration of predeſtina- " tion, and our election in Chriſt." What can be more conſolatory than the religious aſſurance of the decree of God, that is, the condition of ſalvation; and the hope of our election on this decree, this fixed promiſe of the God of truth? Who are the perſons who are to experience this unſpeakable comfort? " Godly " perſons, and ſuch as feel in themſelves the " working of the ſpirit of Chriſt." What are thoſe workings? Not a viſionary elation of mind; not ſpiritual fervour of imagination; but " the working of the ſpirit of Chriſt, mor- " tifying the works of the fleſh and their " earthly members, and drawing up their " minds to high and heavenly things, as well " becauſe it doth greatly eſtabliſh and confirm " their faith of eternal ſalvation, to be enjoyed " through Chriſt, as becauſe it doth fervently " kindle their love towards God." Here no falſe truſt is recommended: nothing for the imagination: but all certain proof; mortification, denial, a mind purified and exalted; that is, the teſt of obedience. The article goes on to deſcribe the bleſſed effects of hope in the

promiſes of God, in thoſe who feel in themſelves the ſpirit of Chriſt; that is, the ſame mind which was in Chriſt Jeſus; not any particular or extraordinary effuſions of the Holy Ghoſt.

It further proceeds to deſcribe the unhappy condition of carnal and curious perſons, lacking this ſpirit, and having continually before their eyes the ſentence of God's predeſtination. Theſe carnal and curious perſons are thoſe who are firmly attached to worldly pleaſures and purſuits, and who reject the offers of God through an obſtinate and vicious temper. What is the dangerous downfall to which the ſenſe of God's predeſtination expoſes them? A ſenſe of deſpair ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of their own miſconduct. It is here to be remarked, that the article makes no mention of particular reprobation, by which they are condemned to the ſeverity of the wrath of the Almighty, and irretrievably loſt; but they become deſperate from a knowledge that eternal life is to be the inheritance of the righteous, by the general decree of God. They are conſcious that they merit nothing; that they are ſubject to his juſt diſpleaſure; and that their condemnation muſt ariſe from themſelves; from their own perverſe diſobedience, and re-

luctance to embrace the promiſes, or to deſerve them by compliance with the conditions. This is the natural conſequence of vice; for what reaſonable being would not deſpair, if he were conſcious of a reprobate mind, and an abandoned conduct? They are thus thruſt by the devil either into deſperation, that is, by obſtinate attachment to their luſts, or into wretchleſſneſs of unclean living. The uſual conſequences of blind perſeverance in infidelity is a vicious life and debauched practice. It is to be obſerved, that the article gives not the leaſt intimation of any abſolute decree of God, by which they are unalterably condemned to this ſtate of deſperation. It merely deſcribes the common effects of wickedneſs and impiety; and indeed theſe are inſeparable in the nature of things. Here is not the leaſt mention of any Calviniſtic doctrine of reprobation, and the article concludes with a clauſe, which may tend to remove all doubts on the ſubject. It arrogates nothing, but leaves the doctrine to our conſideration on the beſt grounds. It refers ſolely to the only true guide, the holy Scriptures; and, aſſerting nothing dictatorial on this abſtruſe ſubject, leaves it to free inquiry, directs us to the true ſource of information, and gives every one an opportunity of determining for

himſelf on the queſtion. "Furthermore, we "muſt receive God's promiſes in ſuch wiſe as "they be generally ſet forth to us in holy "Scripture."

The opinions which divided the Chriſtian world on the decrees of God have ever been very various, and maintained with conſiderable vehemence. The queſtion is in itſelf abſtruſe and difficult; and nothing ſeems to be more contrary to the intention of our bleſſed Lord in all his inſtructions, than that men ſhould enter on ſubtle diſquiſitions on the divine counſels. His doctrines are delivered as matters of authority not to be queſtioned; and nothing can appear more abſurd, than that men ſhould admit the authority, and then engage in controverſies on ſubjects acknowledged to be above them. Yet the world has ever been perplexed with religious diſputes, founded not ſo much on the declarations of Scripture, as on metaphyſical ſubtlety. This ſubject of the divine decrees has been a perpetual ſource of perplexity, and has left the inquirer and the diſputant exactly as they were. Victory has been claimed by every ſide; but truth has been eſtabliſhed by neither. It is therefore with the greateſt propriety that thoſe, who framed this ſeventeenth article of the Church,

concluded it with a clauſe of reference to the beſt and only ſource of information, the Scriptures. The ſeveral opinions, which were the ſubject of diſpute at that period, are evidently avoided; but the article is expreſſed in ſo comprehenſive a manner, that it judiciouſly endeavours to reconcile, as far as poſſible, the different parties who were then engaged in polemic diſputes. And though the Calviniſts, availing themſelves of this moderation, diſtort the true and obvious meaning, nothing can there be found to ſupport their uncharitable dogmas. The doctrine of Calvin on this ſubject was intolerant; he maintained, "that God "predeſtinated, from all eternity, one part of "mankind to everlaſting happineſs, and an-"other to endleſs miſery; and that he was "led to make this diſtinction by no other mo-"tive than that of his own good pleaſure and "free-will[c]." Now though the predeſtination to life is expreſſed in the article, there is not the leaſt mention of a predeſtination to endleſs miſery. Do we here obſerve any reference to the ſubjects of diſpute then prevalent? Do we hear of the ſentiments of the Supralapſarians, who maintained that God framed his decrees

[c] Moſheim, vol. iv.

antecedent to the creation; that he conſulted only his own glory; that he conſidered the good or miſery of man only as it conduced to that limited end, if we may be allowed the expreſſion; and therefore that his glory might depend on the eternal miſery of man? Do we hear of the opinions of the Sublapſarians, who admitted that God has eternally decreed the ſalvation of ſome part of mankind, and who thus far entertained a more charitable doctrine; but that he was regardleſs of thoſe who were not immediately included in the favoured number? Or do we obſerve any reference to the doctrines of the Arminians, who admitted the merciful intentions of the Deity, but, ſuppoſing that his preſcience foreſaw all poſſibilities and contingencies, and foreſeeing alſo how men would act, decreed their ſalvation or condemnation on that foreknowledge? Nor does the article, on the other hand, affirm with the Socinian, that man has no need of inward grace, and no inward aſſiſtance. From whence it is evident, that the orthodox of our Church neither agree with the uncharitable doctrines of Calvin, nor the peculiar tenets of Arminius or Socinus, but that they refer all to the genuine ſenſe of Scripture, without attempting to limit the omniſcience or the omnipotence of God.

Yet as the world was at that period diſtracted by theſe oppoſite ſentiments, we may remark as much caution in the framing of this article, as the violence of the times would admit. Difficult indeed it is to ſteer a ſafe and direct courſe in the ſtorms and rocky intricacies of controverſy. It is however, I think, evident, that no zealot can from this article lay claim to ſuch authority, as to exclude men of more moderate ſentiments from ſubſcribing to its contents.

The ſpirit of modern fanaticiſm conſiſts in giving the higheſt colouring to all the ſentiments of the Church. For beſides this doctrine of predeſtination, other opinions of the Eſtabliſhment are exaggerated. Of theſe the principal are, the doctrines of original ſin, of the juſtification of man, and of good works. Now if we conſider theſe rationally, we ſhall find that the doctrines preached by the Clergy of the eſtabliſhed Church are perfectly conformable to their ſubſcription, to Scripture, to ſound criticiſm, and to common ſenſe. All that is beyond is the mere effect of enthuſiaſm and extravagance. It is therefore of importance to apologize for our brethren, and to endeavour to exonerate them from the ſerious charge of ſubſcribing to certain opinions,

and yet maintaining doctrines diametrically oppoſite.

The doctrine of original ſin has given great offence. Yet in all ages the origin of evil has been the ſubject of inquiry. That moral evil exiſts, has been too long proved by fatal experience to be denied; but abſtruſe inquiries are indefinite. The oriental philoſophy has attempted to account for this by ſuppoſing two principles in the univerſe; a good and bad dæmon, who being, according to ſome, of equal powers, or to others, of unequal, have either divided the empire of the univerſe, or have contended for ſovereignty with each other. This doctrine was entertained by the Jewiſh ſects under different forms; and this infected Chriſtianity in the infancy of its eſtabliſhment. Nor were diſquiſitions on this intricate ſubject confined to believers; for infidels have ever been equally deſirous of accounting for a fact which they cannot deny. But even ſince Philoſophy has been cleared of all the entanglements and abſurdities of darker ages, ſhe has afforded us no ſatisfactory account. What then has been the reſult of all the pomp and parade of metaphyſicians? Moſes they deride; they would ſhake our faith in God; and yet the philoſopher can-

not give us any ſatisfactory anſwer. But as we had rather *walk in the law of the Lord* than *ſit in the ſeat of the ſcorner*, we are ready to believe, that ſin and death have entered into the world by the tranſgreſſions of man, and we think it very conſiſtent with our ideas of the goodneſs of God, to endeavour to reſcue us from ſuch a ſtate of miſery. We are not too proud to admit that this might be done in any manner which the divine wiſdom might be pleaſed to adopt. We are willing to acknowledge, that ſince God has *concluded all in unbelief*, it was with the gracious purpoſe *that he might have mercy upon all*[d].

How the tranſgreſſion of the firſt man ſhould affect all poſterity is indeed incomprehenſible. Yet that all the human race is imperfect, weak, and fallible, both the believer and the infidel muſt acknowledge, ſince they both equally feel it. But the difference is, that the infidel will not accept the remedy, becauſe he does not comprehend the mode of cure. We know that phyſical evil exiſts. Diſeaſe ravages the human conſtitution, and for bodily diſeaſe there are natural remedies, which we adopt, becauſe we have poſitive demonſtration of their

[d] Romans xi. 32.

effects. Now in the ſpiritual ſenſe, have we not high demonſtration? We feel the diſorder, and all its baneful conſequences. We know that he who offers the cure has power to produce it. We know too, that the cauſe muſt be perfectly underſtood by him, and we think it not ſuperſtition to truſt him, whoſe omniſcience foreſees and ſearches all cauſes, and whoſe omnipotence is adequate to all effects. We had rather truſt the declaration of an infallible God, than the aſſertions of fallible man, who can underſtand but little, and prove ſtill leſs. We believe therefore that original ſin "is the fault and corruption of the nature of "every man that naturally is engendered of "the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very "far gone from original righteouſneſs, and is "of his own nature inclined to evil." The ſin of Adam may have affected the moral nature in the ſame way as bodily diſtemper is communicable to ſucceſſive generations. Here is analogy; "ſo that the fleſh luſteth always con-"trary to the Spirit:" and who will be ſo confident as to deny this poſition? Who will dare to affirm, that his natural affections are not often at variance with the will of Heaven? Who ſhall dare to affirm, that his virtues are

unmixed with weakneſs and error? Who will have the preſumption to claim the praiſe of perfect moral excellence?

The article thus proceeds: "And therefore "in every perſon born into the world, it de- "ſerveth God's wrath and damnation." What? Sin undoubtedly; that being morally and eſſentially hateful to God. There is nothing in all this which is not maintained and ſupported in the preaching of every rational member of the Church. But in the following clauſe of the article, we meet with an aſſertion, which muſt confound the pretenſions of enthuſiaſts; that "the infection of nature doth remain, "yea, in thoſe which are regenerated." Fanaticiſm entertains very different ideas of regeneration. Spiritual pride elates itſelf above all inferior beings. It cannot fall from grace.

We next come to an article, which is the ſubject of much diſpute and miſapprehenſion: The juſtification of man. "We are accounted "righteous before God, only for the merit of "our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt by faith, "and not for our own works or deſervings." This is ſo undeniable, that we may add in the ſubſequent words, "Wherefore, that we are "juſtified by faith only, is a moſt wholeſome

" doctrine, and very full of comfort." That juſtification can only depend on the good pleaſure and the will of God, is ſo conformable to every idea of omnipotence, that no one can object to the doctrine. Whoever ſhall conſider the imperfection of our nature; how much of weakneſs is mixed with all our endeavours; that the higheſt degree or act of virtue has an alloy, will not preſume on any act or any power of his own. It may be ſaid, Who could abide, if God be extreme to mark even our beſt actions? The moſt pure of human beings can perhaps ſcarcely ſtand the ſcrutiny of the Searcher of hearts. But even admit that our virtue were perfect, yet God may pleaſe whether he will accept it, or not. Salvation and juſtification are the free gift and bounty of the Creator, juſt as ſtrength, or health, or any temporal enjoyment. It is a free gift or grace of God. He who makes conditions may propoſe alſo the mode of acceptance: for he who has the power of granting terms, has ſome ſovereignty, ſome natural or acquired authority; and though our ſubſequent conduct may entitle us to the privilege annexed to the performance of the condition, yet the nature of thoſe conditions being abſolutely in the power

of the maker or the impoſer, if they be eaſy, it is his bounty who frames them ſo. Now here we have Omnipotence in oppoſition to creature: abſolute power oppoſed to abſolute weakneſs. Every thing on the part of the creature is given; nothing can be claimed. We have no right to the goodneſs or the mercy of God. We are his offspring. We are under the neceſſity of complying with his will; and where conditions are propoſed by abſolute power, even thoſe are a bounty. In earthly tranſactions there may be ſome claim between contracting parties. But between God and man it is not ſo; between the Creator and his creature all is benevolence on the one part, and all obligation on the other.

It is further evident, that faith is the mean by which our ſalvation through Chriſt is to be obtained. He who accepts the promiſes of God muſt believe on him, and on his belief is founded the acceptance of the covenant made between him and the Almighty. Now we can only come to God through Chriſt; he is *the way and the life*, and beſides him there is no other. We muſt therefore be juſtified through faith in Chriſt; we can be juſtified by no other mode. Works are the proof of our perform-

ance, but they are not the terms; for God does not ſave us becauſe we can offer him any thing of right, but becauſe we truſt in him through Chriſt, who ratified the covenant. For the new covenant is not the acceptance of man, becauſe his works have any natural claim, but becauſe God through Chriſt has been pleaſed to promiſe acceptance. Chriſt is the ratifier of the covenant, and faith the bond or inſtrument of our adherence to the Saviour. Further, without faith we cannot have communion with Chriſt, and therefore by the inſtrumentality of that faith are we ſaved. Works, it is evident, cannot ſave us without faith; and as they are produced only by the co-operation of God, and not alone by our own powers, they are the conſequences of grace, but not the ſole conditions of ſalvation. For God does not ſave becauſe man is a worker of righteouſneſs, but becauſe righteouſneſs is worked through faith in Chriſt, who ratifies the covenant, who accepts and confirms it for us. In all ſuch queſtions it muſt be confeſſed that there is much intricacy, and therefore they are to be underſtood only in conformity to Scripture and reaſon: but from this ſtatement, which is, I truſt, the general belief of the

eſtabliſhed Clergy, it is evident that we cannot be charged with neglecting to preach, or with miſrepreſenting, the true doctrines of the Goſpel.

LECTURE VIII.

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wiſdom that is from above is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy.

HAVING conſidered the errors which the miſtaken zeal of many has produced on the ſubject of predeſtination, of original ſin, and the juſtification of man, I ſhall now beg leave to offer a few brief obſervations on the article *Of good Works*, which is alſo liable to ſimilar miſinterpretations.

That the great object of all religion is to render us more acceptable to God, and to improve our moral and religious nature, cannot, it ſhould ſeem, become the ſubject of controverſy. But we are told in the language of enthuſiaſts, that faith is in itſelf ſufficient; and although they do not openly diſcourage the practice of virtue, yet, by inſiſting ſo ſtrongly on an affection of the mind, which they can-

not explain, they ultimately corrupt the ſentiments, by giving the falſe notion, that goodneſs is no recommendation to almighty mercy, and conſequently of little avail.

Now there are no terms more miſrepreſented than thoſe of faith and grace. In the true ſenſe of the Scriptures no rational Chriſtian would ever preſume to diſpute the efficacy of the one, or the divine influence of the other. Grace is the general or particular favour of God, conferred on us through the promiſes of Jeſus Chriſt. It is either abſolute or conditional. Abſolute grace is that by which we enjoy life and all its bleſſings, health, ſtrength, and every other gift of God, which is beſtowed on us without any annexed conditions, and the uſe of which is in a great meaſure dependant on ourſelves: for the preſervation or deſtruction of life or health muſt depend on the conduct of man, and either may be withdrawn whenever it ſhall pleaſe the Almighty. But grace, by which is implied the gifts of the Holy Spirit, is entirely conditional, and requires our acceptance and co-operation: for a reprobate mind may reject, or a careleſs one may abuſe it. Thus the Scripture tells us, *By grace are ye ſaved through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God; not of*

works, leſt any man ſhould boaſt[f]. Thus all is of grace. But what is the gift of God? The grace or favour of God; and if therefore we are ſaved not of ourſelves, if works will not ſave us, neither will faith. For faith is that aſſent which reaſon gives to the word of God, and which may be either implicit and inſtantaneous, or the conſequence of deliberation; for deliberation implies inquiry; and though there may be merit in a ready acquieſcence, there is probably more ſtability in that which is the reſult of calm inveſtigation. Faith in the Goſpel depends on evidence, and is founded on an examination of thoſe evidences which God has been mercifully pleaſed to vouchſafe to us. Without inquiry, it is mere aſſent, not reſulting from any principles, and which therefore can obtain only the name of acquieſcence. But that faith which is built on evidence, and a devout truſt and confidence in the promiſes of God, has all the merit which can be expected from man.

But more particularly the faith which is mentioned in the New Teſtament is well explained by an eminent writer on our Articles, to ſtand "for the complex of Chriſtianity, in

[f] Epheſ. ii. 8, 9.

" oppoſition to the law, which ſtands as gene-
" rally for the complex of the whole Moſaical
" diſpenſation. So that the faith of Chriſt is
" equivalent to this, the Goſpel of Chriſt;
" becauſe Chriſtianity is a fœderal religion,
" founded, on God's part, on the promiſes that
" he has made to us, and on the rules he has
" ſet us; and on our part, on our believing
" that revelation, our truſting to thoſe pro-
" miſes, and our ſetting ourſelves to follow
" thoſe rules. The believing this revelation,
" and the great article of it, of Chriſt's being
" the Son of God, and the true Meſſias, that
" came to reveal his Father's will, and to offer
" himſelf up to be the ſacrifice of this new co-
" venant, is often repreſented as the great and
" only condition of the covenant on our part:
" but ſtill this faith muſt receive the whole
" Goſpel, the precepts as well as the promiſes
" of it, and receive Chriſt as a Prophet to
" teach and a King to rule, as well as a Prieſt
" to ſave us [5]."

Thus our article tells us, that " good works
" are the fruits of faith, and follow after juſti-
" fication." Now from the natural imperfec-
tion of our beſt endeavours, " good works," as

[5] Burnet's Expoſition of the Articles.

the article proceeds to aſſert, "cannot put away "our ſins," that is, by themſelves, by their own right, but only by an aſſumed or acquired value, "and endure the ſeverity of God's judg- "ment;" that is, his ſcrutiny; "yet are they "pleaſing to God in Chriſt, and do ſpring out "neceſſarily of a true and lively faith; inſo- "much that by them a lively faith may as evi- "dently be known, as a tree diſcerned by the "fruit." This ſimilitude is very natural and exact. But enthuſiaſts pretend, that as works are ſaid to be the fruits of faith, therefore they muſt follow of courſe. Now the articles of our Church never aſſert this, nor do the Scriptures. They are always underſtood conjointly. Faith, in the ſenſe of the article, and of Scripture, ſuppoſes goodneſs or virtue. But as faith may be weakened, and we may fall off from grace, it is evident that there cannot be an inſeparable conſequence. For if the tree die, where will be the fruit? The tree may be planted, but it muſt be cultivated, watered, and pruned; and, after all, if the root fail, there will be no produce. Fanatics diſtort truth by exaggeration. Their tenets are founded on ſome undeniable poſition; but are no longer intelligible in vague language. They give the colour of falſehood to the plaineſt fact. That

which is ſtraight becomes crooked, ſeen through a denſer medium, and, like diverging rays, reflects no perfect image. Even thoſe aſſertions, which are not diſputable in their origin, become in the current language of myſticiſm clouded and unintelligible; and there is an awe in myſticiſm, which inſpires veneration in vulgar minds.

From this ſhort ſketch I have endeavoured to ſhew that perſons of a warm temper or bigoted principles give an extravagant interpretation to ſome of the doctrines of our Church; an interpretation which certainly is not agreeable to the original meaning of thoſe who compiled the articles of our faith, and which cannot be ſupported, either by the holy Scriptures, by ſound criticiſm, or the fair and unbiaſſed deductions of reaſon. I ſhall now proceed to offer a few remarks on the method of inſtruction adopted by enthuſiaſts.

It is the nature of all enthuſiaſm to employ a language of its own, which conſiſts of words without preciſe ideas, which are current, but are the denominations, not of a real, but of a fictitious value. The peculiar and appropriate language of the Scriptures, applicable only to paſt times and paſt occaſions, is employed for immediate occurrences; and unhappily the

phraſes and alluſions of the apoſtolic writers are miſapplied, and degradingly familiarized by this ſpecies of affectation. Men of narrow minds are caught by ſingularity, and not ſeldom even wickedneſs may be covered with the deluſive gloſs of words. Thus errors are dignified by the name of Trials, and every extraordinary elation of mind is called Experience. This deceit is very dangerous; for if the commiſſion of error be only a trial, it may follow, that the moſt ſinful may be the moſt approved ſervant: and if ſudden elations or depreſſions of the ſpirits be proof of acceptance and approbation with God, all religion muſt conſiſt in feeling, and not in fact. How contrary is this to the Scriptures, which declare to us the moſt unequivocal marks of juſtification: *He that doeth righteouſneſs is righteous.*

But let us not raſhly accuſe thoſe of hypocriſy who may only be deceived; for ſince religious difference is productive of the moſt bitter animoſity, nothing is more common, than for oppoſite perſuaſions to charge each other with that crime. The ſigns of religious hypocriſy are clearly and eaſily to be detected. Men may be deluded to a moſt extraordinary degree, and therefore all the external marks of hypocriſy are ſometimes erroneous. A man

may deceive himſelf by miſtaking one motive for another, and may therefore fondly conceive that he is under a peculiar influence, when in reality he is actuated by a ſpirit diametrically oppoſite. It is very difficult to guard againſt ſelf-flattery; and the combinations of paſſions, intereſts, and motives, which conſtitute character, are indeed very various and contradictory. But there is one infallible proof, by which others may judge, and which is very ſatisfactory. It is when profeſſions and practice are decidedly at variance, and when thoſe profeſſions ſerve to promote ſome ſecret and temporal advantage. That partiality which prevents a man from perceiving the true motives of his own actions, cannot eſcape the obſervation of others, who can always judge of effects: for the deluſions we practiſe or encourage in ourſelves are clear to other men. Let me not be miſunderſtood as reflecting on thoſe who diſſent from the eſtabliſhed Church. No doubt multitudes act on the beſt motives. Few can be accounted judges of theological queſtions; the great maſs of mankind may therefore be excuſed from acting on common motives without deep reſearch. Many are educated in principles oppoſite to thoſe we profeſs, and every allowance muſt be made for

the influence of education, and the difficulty of making diſtinctions; but at the ſame time we muſt diſcourage preſumption on ſubjects which ought always to be examined with the deepeſt humility, and with calm deliberation. It is the great doctrine of the Goſpel, that we ſhould always live in a ſtate of fear; that is, not of diſtruſt of the power, the truth, or the love of God, but a diſtruſt of ourſelves, leſt we become unworthy, and therefore loſe his favour: but there can be no diſtruſt where there is poſitive aſſurance, and where there is poſitive aſſurance there cannot be humility. Now there is no character more ſtrongly or frequently inſiſted on than religious humility. God is ſaid to deſpiſe and to abhor the proud. In the language of fanaticiſm there is a parade of ſelf-debaſement of the creature, and ſimilar expreſſions, little intelligible to the logician; but where is the mild ſpirit, where is the humble deportment, the meek and downcaſt eye, the contrition of repentance, the trembling of awe, the expreſſion of holy fear? On the contrary, do we not ſee undaunted confidence, open ſcorn, proud and high looks, and every thing but modeſty and forbearance? Do we not hear bold and arrogant, familiar and indecorous addreſſes to Heaven; every external ſign of con-

duct which a creature ſhould not expreſs, and which the idea of the majeſty of Heaven ſhould reſtrain? There is a vanity in religious profeſſions. The individual aims at diſtinction. The Jews were for excluding all but themſelves from the promiſes. The Calviniſts adopt the ſame ſelfiſh ambition; and could the ſecret thoughts of individuals be ſcrutinized and detected, it would often appear, that religious ambition centres in ſelf-love. Thus Providence is circumſcribed by the fanatic, who looks only at a part, and cannot graſp the univerſal and magnificent plan.

It would be harſh to ſay, that enthuſiaſtic principles are hypocritical; but it muſt be confeſſed, that they are calculated to encourage hypocriſy. They aſſimilate to deceitful diſpoſitions; and if they do not find a man a deceiver, not ſeldom make him ſo. They promote a ſuperficial righteouſneſs. They ſubſtitute a nominal for a real religion. They produce an imperfect inſtead of a radical cure of the ſoul. They do not probe the depths of the wound. But ſin muſt be renounced altogether, or faith will be unavailing; and grace cannot act on the ſoul which is not purified. It is eaſy to talk of the juſtification of the ſpirit, and it is pleaſing to conceive that

we feel it. But our divine Maſter has left us deciſive modes of trial. *Not he who ſaith, Lord, Lord, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* And the Apoſtle St. James ſays, *Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will ſhew thee my faith by my works.* It is a deluſion of the moſt groſs kind to teach ſinners to believe that they are ſafe, becauſe they have quieted their own fears, and have no poſitive proof of renovation of ſpiritual health. Yet this is a common practice, and very impoſing; for in the ſickneſs of the ſoul it is natural for ſinners to wiſh to avoid a diſagreeable or a painful remedy. They are apt to ſay, Speak the word only, and we ſhall be healed. The ſame fondneſs which renders the patient deſirous of health will induce him to flatter himſelf that he is better, while the exiſtence and the effects of the diſtemper are evident to all who behold him. Such is the condition of thoſe who imagine that they are in a ſtate of grace, while they are yet in their ſins. They are deceived and elated with imaginary health, while to others they clearly exhibit the miſerable traces of the unſubdued and ſecret diſtemper. Whatever has a tendency to ſpread falſe conceptions of religion muſt be injurious to ſociety; and to teach men to ſubſtitute ap-

pearance for reality, to give other notions of practical virtue than thoſe which tend to eſſential and real reformation, cannot but be conſidered as extremely dangerous. In fact, by this colour of ſanctity vice becomes leſs hideous; the ſtrongeſt bonds of ſociety may be looſened, and the moſt ſerious conſequences muſt unavoidably follow. Such extravagance ſhould not be dignified with the name of religion. It is a ſpecious ſuperſtition, and againſt the prevalence of this the labours of the Clergy ought to be directed.

Our bleſſed Lord has given us a criterion, by which to diſtinguiſh the religious hypocrite from the ſincere believer. *Beware*, ſays he, *of falſe prophets, which come to you in ſheep's clothing; but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye ſhall know them by their fruits*[e]. It is therefore both ſafe and fair to judge of men by their actions; for theſe are the fruits to which the Saviour of the world refers, and which he propoſes to us as the rule by which to try the profeſſions of religion. And he makes a moſt applicable alluſion to the truth of nature in her productions. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thiſtles? Even ſo every good tree*

[e] Matt. vii. 15, 16.

bringeth forth good fruit; *but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit* [h]. And this decisive experiment may be applied to morals; for a good tree, that is, he who acts on sincere principles, cannot produce evil fruit. Virtuous conduct will be the natural effect of virtuous principles; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Minds totally depraved become incapable of good, even in the attempt to act with propriety; the good will always retain a large proportion of evil. *Wherefore by their fruits shall ye know them.*

But another evil attends extravagant zeal. The supreme Being, who should be approached with humility, and with a deep and sincere conviction of our unworthiness; that supreme Being is addressed by enthusiasts in a manner which denotes confidence rather than contrition, unholy presumption rather than devout awe. Thus, instead of impressing the minds of their hearers with the vast difference which exists between the Creator and the creature, they produce a dangerous security, and destroy that reverence and fear, which in the sacred language of the Scriptures is said to be *the beginning of wisdom.*

[h] Matt. vii. 16, 17.

I have hitherto dwelt on ſome of the errors which ariſe from intemperate zeal, as a caution to the younger part of my hearers. The fervour of youth will often lead good minds into exceſs; and unhappily the warmth of imagination, or miſtaken ardour, ſometimes overſteps the bounds of diſcretion. With the beſt intentions ſome are thus deluded, and fall inſenſibly into enthuſiaſtic practices before they are fully aware of the conſequences. I ſhall therefore add a few obſervations on the ſubject. And here I muſt diſcourage the practice of extemporaneous preaching, which it appears to me can anſwer no uſeful purpoſe, but muſt conduce to the degradation, rather than the improvement of the mind.

If we conſider the nature of Chriſtian ſociety, we ſhall find the practice not at all congenial to its preſent ſtate. We are not like the miſſionary, whoſe employment it is to inſtruct thoſe who are not previouſly poſſeſſed of the principles of knowledge; for him the practice may be neceſſary, ſince he is to make an inſtantaneous impreſſion. But we have to communicate inſtruction to thoſe who have been born and baptized in the faith, and have received perhaps ſome previous inſtruction; or at all events, who have their minds prepared

to receive ſuch inſtruction. Our object ſhould be, not merely to awaken the paſſions which are evaneſcent, but to fix and confirm the principles of our religion, and to produce a laſting conviction. It is certainly more decent to come prepared with thoſe diſcourſes to our hearers, which are to teach them the way of everlaſting life. The practice of extemporaneous ſpeaking is applicable to certain purpoſes in life, but certainly not to that of ſolid inſtruction; and better calculated for the intereſts of the preſent world, than for the great and ſublime object of making us *wiſe unto ſalvation*. But the practice of this unprepared mode of inſtruction can never with ſafety be attempted by the younger part of the clergy, ſince it will tend only to diſſipate their own ideas, as well as thoſe of their hearers, and ſeems little becoming the gravity of our doctrines. Theſe obſervations have been made becauſe much is frequently ſaid on the ſubject, and the habit is made a means of dazzling the imagination of thoſe who do not think deeply. How painful is the reflection, that all which the eminent divines of the Eſtabliſhment have written in defence of the truth, and for the improvement of mankind, ſhould be neglected; and that unconnected rhapſodies ſhould be ſubſtituted as

the means of awakening fervour, inſtead of communicating durable inſtruction. The mind cannot be confirmed in goodneſs by occaſional flights of paſſion, but by fixed and indelible principles. The labours of men of the firſt ability have been exhauſted in the cauſe of truth. The works of the ſeveral divines of the Church are beyond praiſe. They are numerous and admirable. To collect the eſſence of theſe incomparable works, the diligence of the preſent day ſhould be directed; and from theſe ſources of religious knowledge mankind ſhould be thus ſupplied with the means of ſubſtantial information on faith and practice. It is therefore truly lamentable to conſider, that the public mind ſhould be miſled by the propagation of confuſed notions and inconcluſive repreſentations of Chriſtianity. To prevent, as far as poſſible, prepoſſeſſions of ſuch a dangerous nature muſt be our duty. Violence indeed of any kind would be as injudicious as it is contrary to our profeſſions; but to diſcountenance ſuch miſtakes muſt be in every ſenſe becoming and ſafe.

Zeal however in the diſcharge of our duty is moſt eſſential; but it muſt be diſcreet. Yet our diſcretion is ſometimes miſrepreſented as coldneſs. But, while we are calumniated, let

us not in return offer any remarks that are perſonal, or that may ſeem directed to any particular ſect or perſuaſion. We are ready to defend our own faith, without giving offence. We are willing that the miniſtry ſhould not be blamed. We are willing to admit every man to the full enjoyment of his own ſentiments. Our arguments are directed not againſt the conviction of any modeſt diſſenter from our faith; but it is the preſumptuous and the illiterate we wiſh to diſcountenance. For while we are the friends of that toleration, which the liberal ſyſtem of our laws permit, yet thoſe at leaſt who inſtruct ought to prove their qualifications. The welfare of ſociety is concerned in preventing the illiterate from becoming teachers. For ſince no ideas are innate to the mind, all knowledge is a tranſplantation of ſomething foreign, and, like an exotic plant, muſt duly be cheriſhed, or it will wither: but errors, like indigenous weeds, grow in the uncultivated ſoil, and abound more where culture is neglected.

To conclude; I muſt again beg leave to obſerve, that my object is to warn the unſuſpecting againſt the preſumptuous. I would not mortify thoſe whoſe zeal, though extravagant,

may yet be ſincere, and who are led into error, rather by a warmth of imagination, than a wiſh to deceive. That mildneſs which characterized our bleſſed Lord himſelf, which marked the firſt teachers of the Goſpel, and which, under the divine goodneſs, was perhaps one of the ſecondary cauſes which contributed towards the preſervation of the Church, during thoſe ages of perſecution which oppoſed its eſtabliſhment; that mildneſs we muſt endeavour to imitate in our addreſſes to thoſe who differ from us only from motives of conſcience. But we muſt at the ſame time deeply lament, that while reaſon, the beſt gift of God, is abuſed by the infidel; while he endeavours to ſhake our faith in all that can give conſolation to this life, in all that can promiſe happineſs hereafter; while with daring preſumption he would alienate our minds from any dependence on him who is the rock of our ſalvation; we ſee another deſcription of men, who deny the utility of learning in ſacred interpretations. Theſe, rejecting the neceſſity of exerting that reaſoning faculty, which is our higheſt diſtinction, imagine themſelves favoured by divine communication, and are induced, from ſuch miſtaken notions, to neglect inſiſting on thoſe

duties, which are ſo ſtrongly inculcated by the holy Scriptures, and which are ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary for the preſervation of Chriſtian ſociety.

We do not pretend to ſay that our Eſtabliſhment, like all human inſtitutions, may not be liable to ſome blemiſhes; but this we may aſſert, that it has been maintained and defended by a ſucceſſion of men of the higheſt human endowments, and the moſt ſolid learning. Indeed we may boaſt, that the Church of Chriſt, from its earlieſt eſtabliſhment, has been ſuſtained by the greateſt ability, under the influence of divine providence and grace. After the firſt Apoſtles, when inſpiration and the power of working miracles gradually ceaſed, the Church was ſupported by the learning and talents of the primitive fathers. But when literature was obſcured by the gloom of the darker ages, and reaſon was loſt in the ſubtlety of ſcholaſtic diſpute, religion was equally involved in a temporary gloom; and all the errors of the Church of Rome demonſtrate to us plainly the ſad effects of ignorance and barbariſm. But from the glorious æra of the Reformation, when a new dawn of mental light ſucceeded, even to the preſent day, the cauſe

of Chriſtianity has been moſt ably ſupported; and we have the ſtrongeſt aſſurance that truth ſhall ultimately prevail, and univerſal righteouſneſs be eſtabliſhed.

NOTES

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LECTURE II.

P. 39. l. 1. *Modern ſceptics have attempted, &c.*] We hear much of ſpontaneous production. But what is this principle? Regular proceſs. Is it not obvious, that the ſeeds of vegetables retain their principles of vitality and growth for a prodigious length of time? Seeds of ſome plants, that have remained long buried in the boſom of the earth, will, on the turning of the ſoil, immediately grow. While they remain too deep in the ground, they cannot receive the benefit of the ſun, and conſequently do not advance. But they become productive on their expoſure to the action of the ſun and the air. Here is a remarkable analogy. The eggs of animals and the ſeeds of vegetables, and eſpecially of the more minute kinds, (for in fact ſeed and eggs are both the cradles of embryons,) retain the principles of life for a conſiderable length of time. This power is dormant under unfavourable circumſtances, but reſtored to activity in others more congenial. When the ſeeds of minute plants are brought to the light, they feel a vivifying power, and become plants; and when the eggs of animalculæ meet a proper nidus, they burſt into life, and become animals. The only difference that

may exiſt, is, that the eggs of animalculæ have a longer retention of the vital principle. But here is no ſpontaneous generation; all is vitality, not from a ſpontaneous principle, but a law of nature.

P. 40. l. 6. *But it is abſurd to admit, &c.*] A naturaliſt, who had ſtudied this ſubject, thought it not impoſſible that the firſt inſects were the anthers and ſtigmas of flowers, which had by ſome means looſened themſelves from their parent plant, like the male flowers of Valliſneria; and that other inſects in proceſs of time had been formed from theſe, ſome acquiring wings, others fins, and others claws, from their ceaſeleſs efforts to procure food, or to ſecure themſelves from injury. He contends that none of theſe changes are more incomprehenſible than the transformation of caterpillars into butterflies. See Botanic Garden, vol. i. additional note 39.

Such are the abſurdities, among many others, which the love of innovation in ſcience induces men to adopt.

P. 43. l. 10. *In all creatures and in all vegetables, &c.*] The proviſion made for birds, to enable them to fly, in the ſtrength of the muſcles of the breaſt, &c. is a remarkable inſtance of Providence. Men and quadrupeds have no ſuch proviſion. "Pectorales muſculi hominis flectentes "humeros, parvi et parum carnoſi ſunt; non æquant 50am "aut 70am partem omnium muſcularum hominis: E "contra in avibus, pectorales muſculi vaſtiſſimi ſunt, et "æquant, imo excedunt, et magis pendent quam reliqui "omnes muſculi ejus avis ſimul ſumpti. Borel. de. Mot. Animal. vol. i. prop. 184. See Derham's Phyſ. Theol.

P. 44. l. 3. *But an argument, &c.*] What is thus called ſpontaneous vitality is perhaps only a variation of the proceſs of nature, which after a given time returns to

its uſual mode. Here is nothing ſpontaneous, that is independent of an eſtabliſhed law. The aphides, it is ſaid, of the ſpring ſeaſon go on to produce nine ſucceſſive generations of offspring; but the laſt again produce eggs for the winter, in which ſeaſon the animal could not feed, and conſequently could not exiſt. Now here let us follow the general analogy of nature. The leſſer ſpecies of animals approach nearer to the vegetable race. In ſome plants there are three different modes of propagation; firſt by ſeed, next by ſcion or ſucker, next by inſertion, when the plant gains root by being ſet in the earth. There is indeed a fourth method, grafting or inoculation; but this is a ſort of paraſitical life, when life is ſuſtained by adventitious roots, &c. Moſt of theſe however produce flowers, and thoſe propagate and produce ſeeds, which are the eggs of the plants; ſo that theſe partial or temporary deviations are returned to the firſt principle; and this may be the conſtant proceſs of the minuter ſpecies of animals. That a polypus ſhould by ſeparation or cutting become a perfect animal is exactly ſimilar. There are temporary deviations, and a limited variety of proceſs; but there is an unerring return to the ſame firſt law.

It is ſaid that the green matter produced in water, as is proved by the experiments of Ingenhouz and Prieſtley, cannot but be ſpontaneous; and Darwin ſays of this and of animals, that it is unreaſonable to ſuppoſe the former, or their eggs to abound in the air. See *Notes on the Temple of Nature.* This green matter, according to the ſame account, produces pure air. Why then ſhould it be improbable that the eggs or parents ſhould not abound in the air, or in water? Are there no ſubſtances exiſting, unleſs viſible to us?

P. 50. l. 25. *The doctrine we mean to advance is, that there is nothing in nature fortuitous.*] Such, even in the

pagan world, was the opinion of Cleanthes, who aſſerted, according to Cicero, in adducing four cauſes which give birth to the idea of a God in the human mind, "Quar-" tam cauſam eſſe, eamque vel maximam, æquabilitatem " motus, converſionem cœli: ſolis, lunæ, ſiderumque om-" nium diſtinctionem, utilitatem, pulchritudinem, ordinem: " quarum rerum adſpectus ipſe ſatis indicaret, *non eſſe ea* " *fortuita*. Ut ſi quis in domum aliquam, aut in gymna-" ſium, aut in forum venerit, cum videat omnium rerum " rationem, modum, diſciplinam, non poſſit ea ſine cauſa " fieri judicare, ſed eſſe aliquem intelligat, qui præſit et " cui pareatur, &c." De Nat. Deor. lib. ii.

P. 60. l. 1. *Every generation of animals can effect exactly as much as a preceding one, but no more.*] The firſt neſt of a bird may not be ſo cautiouſly concealed as a future; but every bird of the ſame ſpecies builds, as all its predeceſſors have built, without variation or improvement. It is alſo remarkable, that all this is done without any opportunity of imitation; for birds, taken early from the parent neſt, and kept in a ſtate of confinement, when they firſt begin to build, act exactly as the reſt of their kind.

P. 60. l. 5. *Thus inſtincts . . . . . never ripen, &c.*] The improvements ſometimes evident in brutes are, enlargements of their faculties, but not of their inſtincts, which are inſtantaneouſly impreſſed. But even to the enlargement of theſe faculties there are limits. Thus a brute, by education, or by the inſtruction of man, may be taught to expand its own powers, as is conſtantly found in training animals for various purpoſes. Again, there are certain effects produced on animals' ſagacity by experience. They learn caution and vigilance by the acquired apprehenſion of danger: but all this dies with the individual. Nay, ſome are born with greater or leſs natural

abilities. But no improvement of the individual can be communicated to a ſucceſſor, conſequently there can be no advance to greater perfectibility in the organic ſyſtem.

P. 66. l. 15. *We have a decided proof that all the phenomena of nature, &c.*] Wollaſton thus beautifully illuſtrates the neceſſity of the exiſtence of a firſt Cauſe. "Suppoſe a chain hung down out of the heavens from an "unknown height, and, though every link of it gravitated "towards the earth, and what it hung upon was not viſi- "ble, yet it did not deſcend, but kept its ſituation; and "upon this a queſtion ſhould ariſe, what ſupported or kept "up this chain: would it be a ſufficient anſwer to ſay, that "the firſt (or loweſt) link hung upon the ſecond, (or the "next above it;) the ſecond, or rather the firſt and ſecond, "upon the third, and ſo on. For what holds up the whole? "A chain of ten links would fall down, unleſs ſomething "able to bear it hindered: one of twenty, if not ſtaid by "ſomething of a yet greater ſtrength in proportion to the "increaſe of weight: and therefore one of infinite links "certainly, if not ſuſtained by ſomething infinitely ſtrong, "and capable to bear up an infinite weight. And thus it is "in a chain of cauſes and effects tending, or, as it were, "gravitating towards ſome end. The laſt (or loweſt) de- "pends on, or (as one may ſay) is ſuſpended upon the cauſe "above it: this again, if it be not the firſt cauſe, is ſuſ- "pended as an effect upon ſomething above it; and if "they ſhould be infinite, unleſs (agreeably to what has "been ſaid) there is ſome cauſe upon which all hang or "depend, they would be an infinite effect without an ef- "ficient: and to aſſert there is any ſuch thing, would be "ſo great an abſurdity, as to ſay, that a finite or little "weight wants ſomething to ſuſtain it; but an infinite "one, or the greater, does not." Wollaſton's Religion of Nature, p. 67.

P. 67. l. 16. *Did ſuperior ſtrength or ſuperior cunning, &c.*] The laws to which brutes are unerringly ſubject are a remarkable proof of the conſtant operation of an overruling Providence. Inſtinct attaches each to its particular genus, but prevents it by ſome unknown principle from any deviation. Hence the genus is ever preſerved, and nature is kept true to itſelf. The philoſopher may ſay, that poſſibly there are mechanical principles which direct inſtinct, though not yet diſcovered by us. But the diſcovery of every inſtance of this kind would be a further manifeſtation of divine wiſdom, and would evince the omnipotence of the Author of ſuch an overruling and coercive power.

Another inſtance of providential deſign is, that influence which has ſubjected the brute creation to the dominion of man. Many animals, were they but conſcious of their own powers, would make man the ſubject: but their knowledge is ſo confined, that in this reſpect only is man the ſuperior. He is lord over all, not by ſuperior ſagacity, for in this moſt animals are his ſuperiors; not by ſtrength, for how very inferior are his muſcular powers to thoſe of many animals! It is by this principle; that animals, though poſſeſſing wonderful faculties of inſtinct, are ſubordinate. The individual poſſeſſes generally but one eminent inſtinct; and being void of ſpeech, there can be no extenſive communication of ideas; for ideas the brute creation certainly poſſeſs; there can be no union, no combination of faculties. It is not fear alone; for how difficult is it to tame the more ferocious! It is this limitation, which God has been pleaſed to fix to their extraordinary powers, that preſerves effectually that law of ſubjection, by which theſe act in uniformity to his decree to man. "Have thou dominion over every living "thing that moveth on the earth[a]." It is by the mental

[a] Gen. i. 28.

powers of analyzing and aſſociating ideas, that man governs, that he controls ſuperior ſtrength, that he overreaches ſuperior ſagacity, and that he ſubjects powers far beyond his own. Now were it for a moment poſſible to ſuppoſe that ſecond cauſes could contribute even to the production of an animated being, would there not be a neceſſity for other controlling cauſes to overrule them?

LECTURE III.

P. 73. l. 16. *While, happily, true philoſophy, &c.*] It is further remarkable, that the hiſtorical books of Moſes carry with them ſuch authenticity as no profane records can boaſt. The earlier hiſtories of the Pagan world, if they deſerve that name, are ſo intermingled with fable, that they are unworthy of attention. Herodotus, the father of the Grecian hiſtory, has founded his narrative ſo much on romance, that in many parts it is incredible. Even Thucydides has not eſcaped the imputation of error. If then we find little that is authentic in the early records of refined nations, how are we to expect ſatisfaction in the fables of barbarous and ignorant people. Now the hiſtory of Moſes extends far beyond the authentic hiſtory of all paſt ages; and his facts are more credible, becauſe an adequate cauſe is aſſigned to every event which he records. For this ſeems to be one great criterion, on which the credibility of the Pentateuch is founded. When we are taught that the ſupreme Being, from motives of affection, is pleaſed to interfere in the affairs of mankind, and to interrupt the ordinary courſe of his providence for their immediate or ultimate good, cauſe and effect are adequate. That he who creates and governs nature ſhould have power ſufficient to arreſt or alter its courſe, is undeniable. When we read of a miracle exerted for the advantage of the world, this is perfectly conſiſtent with almighty goodneſs. But when we read of a miracle performed by

a Pagan deity for the gratification of a brutal appetite, and for that gratification alone, and from no regard for the welfare of men, the whole is incredible and incongruous, becauſe human paſſions do not conſtitute the eſſence of divinity, and criminal enjoyments are injurious to mankind.

P. 78. l. 13. *It was ſuppoſed by ancient philoſophers, &c.*] It is of the greateſt importance for us to be aſſured, that in no reſpect the narration of the ſacred hiſtorian is inconſiſtent with the principles of ſound philoſophy: for on a preſumed error of this nature, the foundation of the Chriſtian religion has been attempted to be ſhaken. Thus, becauſe one writer, in giving the natural hiſtory of Etna, from a miſtaken computation of the ages of its different ſtrata of ſoils, affirmed that the world was more ancient than the Jewiſh hiſtorian aſſerted, no ſmall triumph was afforded to minute philoſophers, until the fact was ſatisfactorily confuted. This able defence of the Moſaic account is contained in a work deſervedly popular. See the Biſhop of Landaff's Apology for the Bible.

"From the ſame fatal and deceitful ſource of reaſoning," ſays another writer, "the Chriſtian religion, whoſe "genuine precepts and doctrines have ſuſtained an ordeal "inquiſition of ages, againſt which no ſyſtem built upon "falſe principles could have maintained itſelf even for a "moment, this excellent diſpenſation, breathing forth "glory to God, and peace and good will amongſt men, "was haſtily rejected, becauſe the population of America, "and the caſual properties of the natives of that country, "could not be accounted for by men who had no other "data whereon to reaſon except the imaginary extent of "their own genius, together with an entire ignorance of "the ſituation of that continent, and the nature of its in-"habitants."

" Even at this day, when theſe erroneous opinions have " been effectually corrected by the advancement of hu- " man knowledge, the truth of this amiable religion is " again triumphantly called in queſtion by modern ſophiſts, " becauſe the creation of the world and its various pro- " ductions, as related in the Jewiſh writings, do not accord " preciſely with the vague and deſultory ſyſtem of every " idle theoriſt; becauſe this ſtupendous work of Omnipo- " tence cannot inſtantly be explained by principles crudely " deduced from the tranſient and contracted analogies of " a few ſpeculative philoſophers.

" In truth, the elevated genius of Longinus, that illuſ- " trious critic of Greece, had not a juſter cauſe for admi- " ration at the noble and ſublime deſcription of creation, as " recorded in the Jewiſh writings, than rational philoſophy " may have at this day in tracing its accurate coincidence " with ſuch few facts as have come within the limited " reach of human obſervation, on this admirable but in- " comprehenſible ſubject."

" The proximity of America to the continent of Aſia " is now perfectly aſcertained by the Britiſh navigators, " although the diſtance between theſe countries was ſtat- " ed by theoriſts as amounting to an impaſſible gulph of " ſome thouſand miles. The confident aſſertion of modern " philoſophers, that its inhabitants were beardleſs, is, from " many quarters, proved to be falſe (ſee Carver's North " America, Cook's Voyages, Marſden's Sumatra, &c.) " And there is every reaſon for believing that the copper " colour, and other peculiarities, are altogether the effect " of climate, ſince in expoſed ſituations the progeny of the " Europeans has been found to ſuffer conſiderable altera- " tions in theſe circumſtances during the courſe of thoſe " few generations which have paſſed ſince their firſt eſta- " bliſhment on that continent: in theſe inſtances there- " fore revealed religion, ſo far from apprehending danger

" by the diſcovery of truth, and the improvement of hu-
" man knowledge, has only ſuffered from the ignorance
" or miſ-information of philoſophers." Hamilton's Let-
ters, and note on the paſſage.

" If we look again into the records that give an ac-
" count of ancient times; nay, if we peruſe the fictions of
" the poets, we ſhall find not the leaſt footſteps of any
" thing exceeding the received opinion of the time of the
" world's beginning. Now it is very wonderful, that, if
" the world was eternal, we ſhould have no hiſtory of
" above three thouſand years ſtanding; nay even that
" Greece itſelf, in ſo many myriads of ages, ſhould offer
" us nothing of this kind until the time of Herodotus and
" Thucydides; and Egypt, the ſchool of Greece not long
" before, ſhould know nothing but a little romantic chro-
" nology, and ſome myſtical hieroglyphics.

" Had the race of men been from everlaſting, or even
" as old as the Chaldeans and Egyptians make it, how
" ſhould it come to paſs that the invention of poetry
" ſhould find no actions worthy in heroic verſe before the
" Trojan or Theban war, or the famed adventure of the
" Argonauts? For whatſoever the muſes (thoſe daughters
" of memory) rehearſed before thoſe times is nothing elſe
" but the creation of the world, and the nativity of their
" gods. Were there from all eternity no memorable ac-
" tions done till about this time? Or had mankind no
" way, till of late, to record and propagate them to poſ-
" terity? It is much, that if men were from eternity, they
" ſhould not in all that duration find out the way of
" writing. Writing, it muſt be owned, is no eaſy inven-
" tion: it is the repreſentation of an image, or the picture
" of another repreſentation, (for as letters are the repre-
" ſentation of words, ſo words are the repreſentation of
" thoughts,) and therefore it required no ſmall penetra-
" tion to deviſe a method of doing this; but then that,

" among ſo many millions of ingenious men, in ſo many " millions of ages, an invention even more difficult than " this ſhould be happily hit on, and ſucceſsfully purſued, " is no wonderful thing at all.

" If we look into arts and ſciences, whether ſuch as be " uſeful or ornamental to human life, we ſhall find their " invention and origin too late to give any ſanction to " the world's eternity." Stackhouſe's Body of Divinity.

P. 84. l. 18. *Now idolatry was not only diſhonourable to the reaſon of man, &c.*] It has been affirmed by one infidel writer, " that the religion of the heathens conſiſted in no- " thing but morality and feſtivals: morality, common to all " men; and feſtivals, which were no more than times of re- " joicing, and could not be of prejudice to mankind." This is a falſe ſtatement of facts: the groſſneſs of idolatry was ſuch, that Orpheus reckoned as many gods as there were days in the year. In the time of Herod, the Greeks had no leſs than thirty thouſand divinities. The Romans, in the times of Varro, had three hundred Jupiters; the ſame god under different titles and names, and with different powers. Some have reckoned no leſs than two hundred and eighty thouſand gods. Now the worſhip of theſe deities conſiſted in the moſt groſs acts of indecency. How then ſhould theſe feſtivals be harmleſs in their tendency? As to their morality, it formed no part of their religion. All the religion of the Pagan world were mere forms and ceremonies. Their feſtivals were calculated rather for the diverſion and relaxation of the people, in which morals were not conſidered. Theſe reſembled the feſtivals of the church of Rome in after ages, in which the Sundays were days of licenſed ſport. Nay, once in our own hiſtory there were public ordinances for ſports on the ſabbath; and to refuſe partaking of them was conſidered a ſpecies of diſaffection. How different was the ſabbath appointed

by God in the Moſaic inſtitution! How different was the ſabbath obſerved by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, and afterwards eſtabliſhed and obſerved with pure and holy rites by his immediate followers, and the earlier Chriſtians! It muſt be great prejudice not to ſee the ſuperior purity and divinity of all the inſtitutions decreed by revelation. In all the Jewiſh inſtitutions we diſcover nothing unworthy the worſhip of a God of purity and holineſs; all is dignified and worthy of his nature, and the ſabbath of Chriſtians is the devotion of ſoul; it is intercourſe with God of the moſt exalted kind, and worſhip due to him even in our preſent ſtate, nor can the veil of fleſh ſeparate us entirely from him, for even while in the body, we thus enjoy an intellectual preſence with God.

LECTURE IV.

P. 109. l. 7. *No religion that has obtained any influence, &c*]. Now though every principle of benevolence is ſo evident in this ſcheme, yet it has been unaccountably urged againſt the ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, that it rather tends to diſcourage patriotiſm, as well as private friendſhip, by this precept of univerſal benevolence, which is ſaid to abſorb all particular intereſts. But this is a groſs error; for univerſal love embraces every individual. The whole includes every part. Nothing is more evident, than that private friendſhip is ſanctioned and encouraged by the example of our Lord himſelf, in the inſtance of the beloved diſciple; in his attachment to Lazarus and his ſiſters; in his choice of the twelve; in his ſelection of diſciples. In truth, the law of general benevolence is not that of perfect equality; for all cannot be ſuppoſed to merit love in the ſame proportion. It is like the light of the ſun, which cannot equally affect all bodies, but which operates in proportion to recipient qualities. It is always active; but, while it communicates cheerfulneſs to many, there are ſome of ſo gloomy a complexion, that they cannot be enlivened. The love of our country, and private affection, are parts of Chriſtian charity. He who loves every man muſt love his friend; but reaſon and juſtice will teach us how to proportion our love, and with what meaſure to diſtribute it. The Chriſtian law ſays, "*Thou ſhalt* "*love thy neighbour as thyſelf, and do unto all as thou* "*wouldeſt be done unto;*" that is, in ſimilar circumſtances.

This then ſeems a rule of juſtice rather than of affection; affection is indeed the motive, but juſtice is the meaſure; and while a man may love another, in this ſenſe, as well as himſelf, he may love a relative or a friend ſtill better than himſelf, by ſacrificing his own advantages for their profit. Again, if by patriotiſm be meant, that blind attachment to political relations, which is to ſuperſede juſtice and morality, this indeed the Chriſtian religion does not inculcate, and cannot encourage; for this would be to violate truth, the great attribute of God, and the characteriſtic of our religion. But if we are to underſtand a fervent attachment to our nation, rather than to ſtrangers, where no duty of juſtice is violated, this the Chriſtian religion allows in common with all virtues. For our religion is an encouragement, not a violation of any natural affections; and this bias of the mind is no where diſallowed. He who loves mankind in general muſt love his country. But religion never recommends the love of the wicked; and if ſtrangers violate juſtice, or offer injury, or prefer their own particular intereſts to the detriment of our own country, they fall under the deſcription of the unjuſt, and conſequently cannot deſerve affection. For it muſt be remembered, that reaſon is to be the guide of our affections; and we are never by Scripture adviſed to act contrary to its determinations. God has given us ardent feelings; he has inculcated a wide diffuſion of our light; but always under the direction of reaſon.

P. 110. l. 20. *Parents commonly love their children, &c.*] Πᾶς γὰρ τὸ οἰκεῖον ἔργον ἀγαπᾷ μᾶλλον, ἢ ἀγαπηθείη ἂν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔργου, ἐμψύχου γενομένου. Ariſt. Ethic. Nicom. lib. ix.

P. 114. l. 5. *Yet here ungrateful and ſullen infidelity, &c.*] We are aſked, if the tidings of ſalvation were neceſſary to be proclaimed, why were they not promulgated to

the earlier ages of mankind? We anſwer, it was ever intimated by the ſuggeſtions of reaſon, by patriarchal tradition, by prophecy, by all the gradual means of diſcloſure. Men were never without ſuch natural light as the Almighty thought fit to diſpenſe, and by that natural light they are finally to be judged. But do we reaſon thus reſpecting the diſcovery of natural knowledge? Do we ſay, why was the wonderful power of the magnet ſo long hidden from paſt ages? Why were men ſuffered to remain ſo long without the means of communicating with each other, and diſperſing the bounties of the earth by commerce, and of communicating knowledge to each other? No, we muſt be content with the reſult, and we ought to be thankful for the goodneſs and gifts of God. For what we all diſcover is in all probability knowledge communicated to us from Heaven by natural means. We term it accidental diſcovery or invention. But let us inquire how many unforeſeen and fortuitous circumſtances conduce to diſcovery, and we ſhall be led to conclude, that ſome influence more than mortal may ſet theſe unforeſeen circumſtances in train. We know not what accident may exactly mean. Sometimes it is the reſult of an unexpected circumſtance, ſometimes the oppoſition of one againſt another, like the meeting of contrary currents in the tides; ſometimes the concurrence of a few or many cauſes, and ſometimes the effect of ſome cauſe directly oppoſite to the firſt intention. Accident is a term of vague meaning, by which we expreſs any unexpected event. But what we think to be accidental may be the reſult of a train or combination of prediſpoſed cauſes; to us irregular, to divine Preſcience perfectly regular. Now all the greateſt of human diſcoveries or inventions have been the reſult of accident; of ſomething never ſought for or intended by the inventor, but which has ariſen unexpectedly while the mind has been engaged in a very fo-

reign purſuit. Invention therefore ſeems to have been a ready power of ſeizing circumſtances, of purſuing an unexpected light, and following inſtantaneouſly a new train of ideas, juſt as in the practical act of the painter, an accidental felicity of touch has ſuggeſted an idea to the eye of genius, never deſigned, but which produces the moſt admirable effect by its converſion to a new purpoſe. There is perhaps no ſuch thing as invention by a train of ideas which can regularly be traced. This is more applicable to the improvement than the invention of art. Now the diſcovery of the magnetic powers, or of the efficacy of ſome method by which diſeaſe may be healed, and other bleſſings, are undoubtedly the ſecret agency of Heaven; and what good, what pious mind is there, that would not cheriſh the idea, that the ſecret interpoſition of Providence may produce ſuch or ſuch reſults from unexpected combinations. In the political world we know that theſe accidents produce mighty convulſions, overturn kingdoms of long duration, and ſubvert plans long digeſted by the prudence and the artifice of man.

P. 114. l. 10. *The anſwer muſt be, that it is impoſſible for finite reaſon, &c.*] To thoſe who object to revelation, becauſe the doctrines are myſterious, it is proper to remark, that this in a great meaſure is an argument in its ſupport. Were the declarations of revelation altogether plain and free from myſtery, they might be oppoſed as the mere inventions of man. For ſince all the procedure of God in his plan of creation abounds in myſtery, it muſt of conſequence follow, that his moral government is of the ſame nature.

There is therefore an analogy in all the operations of the Almighty. If we cannot account for the production of an animal or a plant, and yet ſee that animals and plants are regularly produced, are we to ſuppoſe that God

does not operate by myſterious means in his ſtill more exalted ſchemes of providence? Are we to refuſe aſſent, becauſe his thoughts are not our thoughts, or his ways our ways? The ſupreme Being is unſearchable. God is light; but the light ſhineth in darkneſs, and the darkneſs comprehendeth it not. We muſt be content with ſuch declarations as he is pleaſed to make. But when we reaſon on his decrees, we make that appear little which in itſelf is great, and bring religion, the ſupreme, the firſt, and the laſt good, into contempt. This is to ſupply the ſcorner with objects to which he may direct his ſarcaſm, and enſure his ſucceſs.

P. 116. l. 26. *Whoever attentively and impartially peruſes them, &c.*] Biſhop Stillingfleet, in ſhewing that the Scriptures were delivered in an uniform and agreeable manner, remarks, "that this is not ſufficient of itſelf to "prove the Scriptures to be divine, becauſe all men do "not contradict themſelves in their writings; but yet "there are ſome peculiar circumſtances to be conſidered, "in the agreeableneſs of the parts of Scripture to each "other, which are not to be found in mere human writ-"ings.

"1ſt. That this doctrine was delivered by perſons who "lived in different ages and times from each other. "Uſually one age corrects another's faults; and we are apt "to pity the ignorance of our predeceſſors, when, it may "be, our poſterity may think us as ignorant as we do "them. But in the ſacred Scripture we read not one "age condemning another; we find light ſtill increaſing "in the ſeries of times in Scriptures, but no reflections in "any time upon the ignorance or weakneſs of the prece-"dent; the dimmeſt light was ſufficient for its age, and "was a ſtep to further diſcovery. Quintilian gives it as "the reaſon of the great uncertainty of grammar rules,

'Quia non analogia dimiſſa cœlo formam loquendi dedit.'
"That which he wanted as to grammar, we have as to di-
"vine truths; they are delivered from heaven, and there-
"fore are always uniform and agreeable to each other.

"2nd. By perſons of different intereſts in the world.
"God made choice of men of all ranks to be inditers of
"his oracles, to make it appear it was no matter of ſtate
"policy or particular intereſt which was contained in his
"word, which perſons of ſuch different intereſts could
"not have agreed in as they do. We have Moſes, Da-
"vid, Solomon, perſons of royal rank and quality; and
"can it be any mean thing which theſe think it their
"glory to be penners of? We have Iſaiah, Daniel, and
"other perſons of the higheſt education and accompliſh-
"ments; and can it be any trivial thing which theſe em-
"ploy themſelves in? We have Amos, and other pro-
"phets in the Old Teſtament, and the Apoſtles in the
"New, of the meaner ſort of men in the world; yet all
"theſe join in conſort together; when God tunes the
"ſpirits, all agree in the ſame ſtrain of divine truths, and
"give light and harmony to each other.

"3rd. By perſons in different places and conditions;
"ſome in proſperity in their own country, ſome under
"baniſhment and adverſity, yet all agreeing in the ſame
"ſubſtance of doctrine; of which no alteration we ſee
"was made either for the flattery of thoſe in power, or
"for avoiding miſeries and calamities. And under all the
"different diſpenſations before, under, and after the law,
"though the management of things was different, yet
"the doctrine and deſign was for ſubſtance the ſame
"in all. All the different diſpenſations agree in the ſame
"common principles of religion; the ſame ground of ac-
"ceptance with God, and obligation to duty was com-
"mon to all, though the peculiar inſtances wherein God
"was ſerved might be different, according to the ages of

" growth in the church of God. So that this great uni-
" formity conſidered in theſe circumſtances, is an argu-
" ment that theſe things came originally from the ſame
" Spirit, though conveyed through different inſtruments
" to the knowledge of the world." Origines Sacræ, book iii. chap. 6.

P. 118. l. 13. *It is only propoſed at preſent to obſerve, &c.*] The ſtrict obſervance of local circumſtances in the New Teſtament is a ſtrong evidence of its truth. There is a remarkable coincidence of this kind in the account of the denial of Peter. It is ſaid, that as he ſtood by the fire in the hall, and warmed himſelf, a damſel obſerved him, and recognized his perſon. The natural warmth of a country ſituated in the latitude of Judea, might induce us to ſuppoſe that a fire could not have been neceſſary at that ſeaſon of the year, and conſequently to ſuſpect miſapplication of coſtume in the writer; but it appears from the evidence of modern travellers, that at this ſeaſon of the year ſevere cold is experienced in Paleſtine. Many of the alluſions of our Lord himſelf are equally in ſtrict conformance with the cuſtoms and manners of the inhabitants of Judæa. See Harmer.

P. 120. l. 7. *But when human genius is employed, &c.*] The Grecian poets had no prototypes, or materials, from whence to give dignity to ſuch ſubjects; and though aided by the ſublime deſcriptions of holy writ, yet the great Poet of our nation falls beneath himſelf, when he has occaſion, in his immortal work, to introduce the Almighty, or the Son of the Higheſt, converſing on the tranſcendent ſcheme of redemption. He who could ſo finely deſcribe the pride of rebellious and fallen ſpirits, or ſo exquiſitely paint the ſweetneſs of miniſtering angels; he who could ſo greatly picture the warring hoſt of

heaven, if we allow for ſome defects naturally ariſing from metaphyſical indiſtinctneſs, can never reach the ſublimity of the Hebrew poetry, or give ſufficient grandeur to his ſubjects on ſuch occaſions.

P. 121. l. 27. *How ſhall we be able to ſum up the many exemplifications of excellence, &c.*] Under all the perſecutions to which our Lord was expoſed, and amid all the inſults from perſons in authority, it is to be obſerved, that he never retaliated; but conſtantly recommended ſubmiſſion to thoſe who were in power. This could not ariſe from timidity, or from a deſire to court protection, becauſe we always read that he openly and boldly condemned the immoral conduct, and the deception of the Scribes and Phariſees; reprehending their ſuperſtitious perverſion and miſinterpretation of the Moſaic ſcriptures. He ſeverely reprimands them for oppreſſion, and for impoſing burdens on the conſciences of men, which they themſelves, to uſe his own emphatic expreſſion, would not lift a finger to bear. Now whoever conſiders the true ſublimity of the Chriſtian doctrines, and comprehends their ultimate object, muſt underſtand how infinitely inferior all temporal conſiderations are, when put in competition with the concerns of a better world. Thoſe doctrines therefore look to temporal life only, as far as it may ſerve to increaſe the kingdom of righteouſneſs, and to purify the ſoul. It was therefore not the deſign of a Saviour, and inſtructor in heavenly things, to interfere with the mutable and local laws of temporal government, or the changes of empires. Yet theſe are indeed objects of a divine Providence. They are not unregarded by him, who now ſitteth on the right hand of God, in power and great glory. But his commiſſion, while on earth, was to withdraw our attention from this world, and to raiſe in us higher views; and while we are

inſpired with ſentiments truly Chriſtian, ſubmiſſion to juſt and legal authority, like all other branches of juſtice, will be fully impreſſed on our minds, and be a rule of our conduct. Submiſſion to legal authority, is then not only a political, but a moral and a Chriſtian virtue. He can neither poſſeſs a celeſtial or good frame of mind, who is turbulent or factious, or a diſturber of the public tranquillity. The juſt man will only reſiſt illegal oppreſſion; but will on all occaſions, where he can conſcientiouſly do ſo, ſubmit himſelf to every ordinance of man; not only for conſcience, but for the Lord's ſake. No duties are preſcribed to us by Jeſus Chriſt but ſuch as have a tendency to purify the heart, and to prepare us for a better and a more permanent ſtate: and the virtues of a good citizen, like other moral duties, ſerve to qualify us for this better ſtate; by the practice of juſtice, temperance, fidelity and meekneſs, patience and rectitude. However conducive to immediate, or local, or temporal convenience modes of government may be, it is clear that no precepts can apply but ſuch as are general; and that it would be uſeleſs, and an inconceivable labour, to lay down inſtruction for conduct in all theſe complicated, varying, and mutable occaſions. Theſe conſequently are too fluctuating, and too comparatively inſignificant, to require minute detail from him, who came to teach in the more important government of our paſſions; to direct us in the way to everlaſting life, and to raiſe our thoughts to a kingdom not of this world.

P. 124. l. 5. *So aſtoniſhing are the proofs of his power, &c.*] In the very moment in which men forſake the clear and direct road of evidence, and venture on the boundleſs ocean of conjecture, they loſe ſight of truth; all is then confuſion and myſtery. Of this the numerous and abſurd errors of the earlier ages of Chriſtianity are a

proof. The Grecian philoſophers could not reconcile the Chriſtian doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, to their ſyſtems, and therefore endeavoured to render them comprehenſible. Praxeas, a man of genius and learning, began to propagate theſe vague explications at Rome, and was ſeverely perſecuted for the errors they maintained. He denied any real diſtinction between the Perſons of the Trinity. Hence his followers were called Monarchians and Patropaſſians, becauſe they believed, according to Tertullian, that the Father was ſo intimately united with the man Chriſt his ſon, that he ſuffered with him in all his paſſion, in the miſeries of his life, and the pains and ignominy of his death.

On the other hand, the ſchools of oriental philoſophy, ſuppoſing that the divine nature could not be capable of human ſuffering, attributed to Chriſt, not a real, but a celeſtial and aerial body, which was apparently, but not ſubſtantially crucified. Of this opinion was one Bardeſanes, and others. See Moſheim.

LECTURE V.

P. 137. l. 20. *But the ſame remark may be made on both, &c.*] Now let us ſee what the nature of human confederacy muſt have been, to have effected ſuch a continuance as the conſiſtent eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity; how utterly impoſſible the agreement of the actions, and how miraculous if ſucceſsful; for nothing leſs than miracles could have enſured ſucceſs. That traditional intimations of the will of God were known to very early ages, is undoubted; that after this period prophecies were promulgated, is incontrovertible. Thoſe prophecies foretold future events, which could not be ſuſpected by the prophets as probably about to happen; for it is now an eſtabliſhed truth, that the predictions were antecedent to the events. We ſee the ſeveral and ſucceſſive prophets not deſirous of acquiring poſthumous fame by independent reputation, becauſe they reſted all their predictions on the foundation that had been laid by others. Thus, for inſtance, Moſes announced the God of Abraham. Iſaiah, and other of the major prophets, and after them the minor, independently eſtabliſh by their predictions a religious ſyſtem not of their own invention. They proclaimed the religion of their predeceſſors, of Abraham, and of Moſes, ſo that they relied on a concatenation, of which they were only ſeparate links. They conſented to act ſubordinate parts. The ſame is obſervable of all the agents of divine Providence in the ſyſtem of revelation,

whether prophets or kings, whether legiſlators or prieſts, whether great men or obſcure. Our bleſſed Redeemer, with a peculiar humility, reſted all the evidence of his miſſion on the foundation thus prediſpoſed, and aſſumed no reputation for himſelf: all he did, or ſaid, was for the glory of the Father. We next ſee the Apoſtles reſting on the ſame foundation, nay, even riſking life, and braving perſecution, for the reputation of their crucified Maſter, and for the glory of God; riſking all for a reputation, which, if that had been the motive, could only have been ſubordinate. I ſhall not in this place inſiſt on the little probability of ſucceſs they could have, and what dangers they encountered in the endeavour.

Let us next ſee what a wonderful concurrence of events contributed to all theſe extraneous, as well as connected circumſtances. Did Alexander purſue his courſe of mad ambition to fulfil the prophecies of Daniel; or did the great actors of the Roman hiſtory contribute their efforts to the production of this extraordinary completion of prophecy? Little did Cyrus, or did Alexander, or any of the heathen inſtruments of a divine Providence, ſuſpect that they were the agents of uncontrollable events; events ſince known to have been produced by the ſecret and irreſiſtible councils of God. If then all the moſt important occurrences of human life, if nature itſelf unite in the completion of ſuch a ſcheme, ſo long before proclaimed, ſo repeatedly and regularly publiſhed and expanded, it ſeems difficult to underſtand how ſuch evidence can be rejected.

P. 144. l. 5. *Thus the arcana of ſacred and profane hiſtory, &c.*] "Beſides theſe prophecies concerning our "Saviour Chriſt, there are others contained in the Scrip-"tures, concerning the fates and ſucceſſions of the chief "kingdoms, empires and polities of the world; as of the "riſe of the Perſian monarchy; of its fall and conqueſt

" by the Macedonian Alexander; of the quadripartite " diviſion of this Greekiſh empire after Alexander's death; " of the ſucceſſion of the Seleucidæ and Lagidæ, a pro- " phetic hiſtory ſo agreeable with the events, that it " was by Porphyrius pretended to have been written after " them; and laſtly, of the riſe and continuance of the Ro- " man empire. For, notwithſtanding the endeavours of " ſome to pervert all thoſe Scripture prophecies that ex- " tend to the preſent times, it is clearly demonſtrable, " that this was Daniel's fourth ten horned beaſt, or " the legs and toes of Nebuchadnezzar's ſtatue, that " fourth empire ſtrong as iron; which came at length to " be broken or divided into ten or many principalities, " called in the prophetic language, and according to the " Eichon, horns; amongſt whom was to ſtart up, " another horn with eyes, ſpeaking great words againſt " the Moſt High, and making war with the ſaints, and " prevailing againſt them for a time, times, and half a " time. Which prophecy of Daniel's is the ground work " of St. John's Apocalypſe, it being there further inſiſted " upon, filled up and enlarged with the addition of ſeveral " particulars; ſo that both Daniel and John have each of " them, from their reſpective ages, ſet down a prophetic " calender of times, in a continued ſeries, (the former " more compendiouſly and generally, the latter more " copiouſly and particularly,) to the very end of the " world.

" And thus do we ſee plainly, that the Scripture pro- " phecies evince a Deity; neither can theſe poſſibly be " imputed by Atheiſts, as other things, to men's fear and " fancy, nor yet to the fiction of politicians. Nor do " they only evince a Deity, but confirm Chriſtianity alſo; " partly as predicted by them in its ſeveral circumſtances, " a grand one whereof was the Gentiles' reception of it; " and partly as itſelf predicting future events, this Spirit

" of prophecy being the teſtimony of Jeſus. Both which " Scripture prophecies, of Chriſt in the Old Teſtament, " and from him in the New, are of equal, if not greater " force to us in the preſent age, for the confirmation of " our faith, than the miracles themſelves recorded in the " Scripture; we having now certain knowledge ourſelves " of many of theſe events, and being no way able to ſuſ- " pect, but that the prophecies were written long before." Cudworth's Intellectual Syſtem of the Univerſe, p. 714.

P. 146. l. 3. *The perverſe and determined infidel, &c.*] In reaſoning on the decrees of God, we are not to expect a ſolution of all difficulties. All that we have to conſider is, whether they be conſiſtent with each other. Are his proceedings, as far as they are revealed, conformable with his promiſe? If we perceive a ſucceſſive chain of events tending to the ſame purpoſe, we ſee the progreſs of fulfilment. We have no right to demand the reaſons of his procedure, becauſe it is perfectly conſonant to our idea of his attributes of perfect wiſdom, and goodneſs, and power, to conceive that we are incompetent to underſtand them. We have no right to demand the reaſons, becauſe it is all free gift and grace on the part of God. We are to accept with humility. It is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that we cannot comprehend infinite wiſdom. For can that which is infinite be commenſurate to ours? We muſt accept the gift as we ſhould from the unlimited power of an earthly potentate. It is material for us to obſerve, that the promiſed advantages go on progreſſively towards completion; but to inquire into the reaſon of the bounty is only gratifying to an unprofitable curioſity. It might indeed amuſe us, but it could not advance the fulfilment.

Neither ought we to doubt of the conſiſtence of the great ſcheme of Providence, from the apparent diſagreement of a few parts. This happens in all the works and

the ways of God Almighty. In the planetary ſyſtem, there are what we, from the imperfection of our apprehenſion, call anomalies. Theſe are probably only anomalies to our finite apprehenſions. They may be a conſiſtent part of the whole grand ſcheme. Yet do theſe affect that whole? Is the uniformity of the planetary laws in general affected by theſe apparent deviations? Purſue the inquiry throughout all the operations of divine ſkill, and we ſhall find a few deviations in every part; in the conſtitution of the human frame; in the conſtitution of animals; yet theſe do not deſtroy the uniformity of the whole. We cannot account for ſome of the Moſaic inſtitutions; we cannot comprehend ſome of the declarations of our bleſſed Lord. In the Scriptures there are ſome things hard to be underſtood; but ſhall weak men wreſt theſe to their own deſtruction? Is the general harmony deſtroyed by theſe comparatively little deviations? Nature travaileth in pain for grace and pardon; for reconciliation. Pardon and grace are promiſed, and the means of reconciliation are appointed. Shall we not accept them? Shall we refuſe the bounty becauſe the ground and motives of grace are not fully explained? Shall we reſolve to periſh everlaſtingly, becauſe we are diſputatious and doubtful? Shall the criminal refuſe pardon, becauſe he has not been fully made to underſtand all the motives, all the combination of ſentiments, which awakened the compaſſion of the Power, which gratuitouſly offers the pardon?

LECTURE VII.

P. 190. l. 19. *We next come to an article, &c.*] "The "reformers made it the chief ſubject of their books and "ſermons, to perſuade people to believe in Chriſt, and "not in the Church, and made great uſe of thoſe places "in which it was ſaid, that Chriſtians are juſtified by "faith only: though ſome explained this in ſuch a man-"ner, that it gave their adverſaries advantages to charge "them, that they denied the neceſſity of good works; "but they all taught, that though they were not neceſſary "to juſtification, yet they were neceſſary to ſalvation. "They differed alſo (from the Papiſts) in their notion of "good works: the church of Rome taught, that the ho-"nour done to God in his images, or to the ſaints in "their ſhrines and relics, or to the prieſts, were the beſt "ſort of good works: whereas the reformers preſſed juſ-"tice and mercy moſt, and diſcovered the ſuperſtition of "the other. The opinion of the merit of good works "was alſo ſo highly raiſed, that many thought they pur-"chaſed heaven by them. This the reformers did alſo "correct, and taught the people to depend merely upon "the death and interceſſion of Chriſt. Others moved "ſubtler queſtions; as, whether obedience was an eſſential "part of faith, or only a conſequent of it: this was a "nicety ſcarce becoming divines, that built only on the "ſimplicity of the Scriptures, and condemned the ſubtle-"ties of the ſchools; and it was ſaid that men of ill lives "abuſed this doctrine, and thought, if they could but aſ-

" ſure themſelves that Chriſt died for them, they were " ſafe enough. So now, when they ſettled the notion of " faith, they divided it into two ſorts : the one was a " perſuaſion of the truth of the Goſpel, but the other " carried with it a ſubmiſſion to the will of God ; and " both hope, love, and obedience, belonged to it ; which " was the faith profeſſed in baptiſm, and ſo much extolled " by St. Paul. It was not to be ſo underſtood, as if it " were a certainty of our being predeſtinated, which may " be only a preſumption ; ſince all God's promiſes are " made to us on conditions ; but it was an entire receiving " the whole Goſpel according to our baptiſmal vows. " Cranmer took great pains to ſtate this matter right ; " and made a large collection of many places, all written " with his own hand, both out of ancient and modern " authors, concerning faith, juſtification, and the merit of " good works ; and concluded with this : That our juſ- " tification was to be aſcribed only to the merits of Chriſt ; " and that thoſe who are juſtified muſt have charity as " well as faith, but that neither of theſe was the merito- " rious cauſe of juſtification." Burnett's Abridgement, " A. D. 1540. There is much to the ſame purpoſe in his Hiſtory of the Reformation in the ſame year. See the Biſhop of Lincoln's Refutation of Calviniſm, where this ſubject is fully diſcuſſed.

LECTURE VIII.

P. 196. l. 5. *Now there are no terms more misrepresented, &c.*] Enthusiasts make no distinction between different kinds of faith; neither are their conceptions on the subject clear or defined. The faith on which they so much insist, is a species of inspiration; a mere illumination of the mind. Now faith, in the true Scripture signification, is a faith of works. It is like the principle of action and reaction. Thus the instances recorded in the Epistle to the Hebrews, chap. xi. are all of this kind. The faith of Abraham was exhibited by his readiness to perform an act, which has been objected against by unbelievers. The command to sacrifice his son Isaac, they say, was inconsistent with the goodness of God. Admit this for a moment, and do we not perceive that the confidence expressed by Abraham, the trust he reposed in the promises of the Almighty, was the more meritorious on this very principle, because it appeared in a distrustful shape. But objectors are to remember, that it was a trial, and therefore not objectionable, because the act was prevented by the interposition of an angel. Now what was the nature of this instance of faith; was it mere confidence? No; it was obedience. It was a work. He was to believe, and to act on that belief. He was satisfied with the evidence of the command, and he was ready to prove his faith by performance. The faith of Moses, and others enumerated in the same chapter, were all of this kind. What was the faith of the prophets who are there described,

who " had trials of cruel mockings and ſcourgings, yea, " moreover, of bonds and impriſonment; who were " ſtoned, were ſawn aſunder, were tempted, were ſlain " with the ſword; who wandered about in ſheepſkins and " goatſkins; being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented; and of " whom the world was not worthy?" All theſe inſtances are abſolute proofs of the neceſſity of good works.

FINIS.

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